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REV. R. HENDERSON, M.A.

ROBERT HENDERSON

THE STORY OF A MISSIONARY GREATHEART IN INDIA

BY THE REV.

J. SINCLAIR STEVENSON, M.A., B.D.

AUTHOR OF "SHEILA'S MISSIONARY ADVENTURES," "STORIES OF IRISH SAINTS," "THE FRIEND OF LITTLE CHILDREN"



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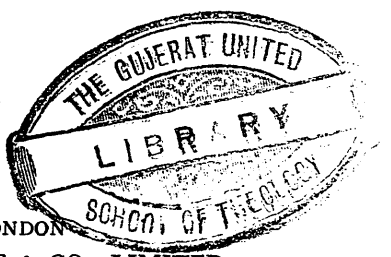
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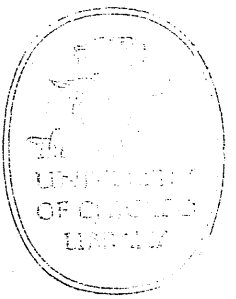
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TO

HIS CHILDREN

Printed in Great Britain

PREFACE

ROBERT HENDERSON, whose life story is told in the following pages, held a unique place in the hearts of his fellow missionaries. "He was the loved of all," and when the sad story of his tragic death reached them, they felt for the moment that all the sunshine of life had departed. He was altogether lovable and wherever he went he created an atmosphere of love and goodwill. Everyone was drawn to him, and his friends both in India and Ireland were very numerous. The coronet which Lowell placed on the brow of the Swiss naturalist, Agassiz, that "where'er he met a stranger there he left a friend," might have been placed on Robert Henderson's brow also. He had, too, a richly endowed, many-sided nature. His gifts, both intellectual and practical, were very striking. His heart was as "big as a Church," to use the phrase which R. L. Stevenson wrote of James Chalmers. He had consecrated all his talents to the service of Christ in India, and thus he had grown into a manhood of rare beauty and strength, and had accomplished a work in Borsad and other centres, which was always the admiration and often the wonder of

his fellow workers. When the first shock of his death was over, they felt that there ought to be some permanent memorial of so fine a missionary and to the great satisfaction of all, his dear friend and fellow labourer, the Rev. J. Sinclair Stevenson, consented to write the story of his life. The book is now sent forth in the hope that others may be influenced to follow aims as noble, and that some of them may take up the burden of Christ's cause in Gujarāt which he and so many others in recent years have been compelled to lay down.

There is an intense pathos in the narrative of the closing months of his life. He had come home crippled and broken down in health. When he reached Belfast he was so weak and helpless that he had to be carried off the boat. Every one felt that he could never go back to India again. But with medical skill and careful nursing, his strength began to return. In a comparatively short time he was so well that the doctor gave his consent to his going back. Some of us felt that he ought to wait a year at least before undertaking so arduous a task. But no! The immediate call of India was too urgent. She was now in the gravest crisis of her history. Her needs were desperate. Appeal after appeal had been made to men at home to take up the work and these had all been

in vain. There was no one to take his place. He could not do otherwise. He must go at once. But God had other fields for him to work in. It is a page of biography, which, to use the words written by F. W. Robertson of Henry Martyn's life, "may well be blistered with hot tears of shame."

JAMES HAIRE.

Foreign Mission Office,
Church House,
Belfast.
October, 1922.

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CHAPTER I

Early Years

RIGHT in the heart of County Antrim, to the north of the shores of Lough Neagh, and about three miles from Randalstown, lies the townland, or parish, of Muckleramer, and there, anyone will direct you up the hill to Fair View House, rightly so called, for is it not said that " there isn't the width of a penny's difference between the view from Fair View and from Slemish itself ? " And in Fair View, one happy day, the 3rd of May, 1863, a little boy was born, the fourth of a family that ultimately numbered ten, four of them boys and six girls. The owner of the house was a Mr. James Henderson, a well-known farmer of the district, and descended from generations of farmers, so that it was said that a Henderson had been farming in Muckleramer for three hundred years. The baby's mother was the daughter of a Mr. Middlemiss, who had come over from Scotland to be General Manager of Lord O'Neill's estate close by. The child was baptised soon afterwards under the name of Robert, and grew up the happiest member of that pleasant country household.

On Sundays the whole family went to the Presbyterian Church at Randalstown, where Robert's grandfather, Francis Henderson, was an elder. The children would start early, walking the three miles, to attend Sunday School before the morning service began, their elders and one or two perhaps of the younger children following in the family trap. On week-days, when he grew old enough, Robert used to attend the National School at a neighbouring village called by the pretty name of Terrygowan, and there he continued to go till he was fourteen years old.

It must have been a happy childhood for the boy, who was equally at home when working at his lessons or playing about the farm. And no doubt many things influenced him for good; the books he read, the chance words of minister or Sunday School teacher, the sights and sounds of the country-side. But the greatest influence in his life, as in that of another apostolic man eighteen centuries before, was that of his mother and of her mother too, the mother and grandmother who are still remembered as two of the saintliest women that ever blessed a congregation with their presence and influence.

And it was historic, even holy, ground, that corner of Co. Antrim, for was it not on the sides of Slemish over there to the north-west that

St. Patrick, as a sad-hearted captive slave, first came to know his Saviour, and so laid the foundations of his long life of service for Ireland, which he found predominantly heathen and left predominantly Christian? Robert could probably never remember the day when that magnificent view from his father's house was not familiar in every detail, sweeping round from Slemish to Lough Neagh and the Mourne mountains beyond, and then round again to Lough Beg, the foreground dotted in every direction with the farms and houses of friends and neighbours. The spirit of St. Patrick still haunts the place, and more than one well-known missionary in these past years has come from the country that lies within the Fair View horizon. Nor did Robert escape the influence, and there is a story told of his gathering his little sisters and brothers and compelling them to be heathen, and sit round on the ground, while he climbed up on a table read some prayers out of a book, and then started to preach to them. This was not just play, for from childhood upwards it was his great desire to be a missionary.

He worked well at school, and gave plenty of evidence of ability. He had a splendid memory, and could repeat anything that had been read over to him carefully a few times. Indeed the master of the school must have been counting

on him hopefully as one of the pupils who would do him credit in time to come, so it was a great blow to all concerned when the boy's father suddenly decided that, at fourteen, Robert had learnt enough from books and that it was time he started learning the practical side of a farmer's work. Robert was not the kind of boy to grumble; it was an art he never learnt; but it must have been a bitter disappointment to the lad to leave school just when the gate of knowledge was opening before him. No doubt he did as well as he could on the farm—he would do everything as well as he could; and there were times afterwards in India when he was probably thankful for every scrap of experience and knowledge that he gained in his father's fields. But farming did not particularly appeal to him all the same. And so, after working faithfully at his father's bidding on the farm for two whole years, he asked to be allowed to go back to school. His mother warmly seconded his wishes, but his father was obdurate, and it taxed all the wise, kindly minister's powers of tact and persuasion, as he walked the stern farmer up and down, up and down his lawn for hours to induce him to give in. But when he did yield, he yielded gracefully enough, and from now on Robert was given every chance to become a scholar.

The boy went to an excellent intermediate

school at Randalstown, presided over by Mr. J. M. Finnegan, later so well-known in connection with the Queen's University; and when this school was given up, Robert attended an equally well-known school in Antrim, to which he used to go every day by train from Randalstown. Another scholar of that Antrim School, J. F. Steele, was later to be his friend and colleague in India, but it is not clear that they were actually contemporaries at school. It cannot have been easy for a boy like Robert, after being away from school for those invaluable years from fourteen to sixteen, to make up for so much lost time, but cheerful pluck proved equal to the task, and by the time he left, he must have been a match for the best. We don't hear much of games and athletics in the accounts of his school days. Boys who had a train journey and a three mile walk between school and home had little opportunity for games, and Robert had the additional handicap of a slight weakness in one arm, apparently caused in infancy by the carelessness of a nurse, though this never prevented him in after days in India from being a vigorous tennis player or a tireless rider, or an enthusiastic swimmer.

In 1881, Robert went up to Queen's College, Belfast, and for the next three years he missed no opportunity of showing the stuff he was made of, becoming a scholar of the College, and taking

honours in the final examination for the B.A. degree in Logic, Metaphysics, the History of Philosophy and Political Economy. This he followed up the next year by taking the Senior Scholarship in Logic, Metaphysics, and Political Economy, and his M.A. degree. But they were light-hearted years, those student years in Belfast; and, when he spoke of them in after days, you heard very little of Metaphysics and Political Economy and a great deal of the sort of things that went on behind the scenes in the different classrooms. Robert Henderson must have been an ideal companion then, with his exuberant spirits and his never-failing cheerfulness. Indeed so marked were these characteristics, that his less intimate acquaintances and even his lecturers only realised the ability of this student, who seemed to be a perpetual storm centre of fun and laughter, when the examination day revealed its secrets.

Yet it was during those College years that he gave definite indication of where he stood in the things that matter, being admitted, along with his closest College friend, to Communion in the Church of his home life at Randalstown, on October 25th, 1883.

From Queen's College he proceeded to the Presbyterian College not many yards away, to prepare for the ministry, and during his three

years there he once more gave his friends at Fair View plenty of excuse for throwing up their caps, for he won the First Scholarship both in his second and third years, and ended by coming out top in the final examination.

CHAPTER II

Home Ministry

DURING his College course Henderson had been under the care of his home Presbytery, the Presbytery of Templepatrick, whose name once more suggests the missionary romance of that part of Co. Antrim, and when the last examination was passed, it was this Presbytery which licensed him to preach the Gospel.

But others had their eye on the brilliant young student, and in particular the people of a little town called Castledawson, in Co. Derry, only just across the Bann, and so not very far from Robert Henderson's home. There happened to be a vacancy here, and Henderson seemed the very man to fill it. But this was not at all the idea with which he had been climbing the long ladder of school and College all these years. He was still the same essentially as the child who had gathered his little brothers and sisters that he might preach to them as heathen, and it was not the pleasant life of shepherding Christian people at home that attracted him to the work of the ministry, but the desire to preach Christ

where His name was as yet unknown, and to enlarge the borders of His Kingdom. So it must have been a great blow to all these hopes when he found that his father and mother would not hear of his going so far away. Surely there is nothing more strange than the persistency with which missionary after missionary has found that those who stood in the way of the labourer going to the harvest fields were the very parents from whom they had first learnt the worth of Christ's service. For the soldier and the administrator and the pioneer of commerce are never told by those they love not to go so far away from home. It must have been specially perplexing to him when his saintly mother too was among those who begged him not to go. But from the days of Patrick most missionaries have had the same disheartening experience, and Robert Henderson, believing, rightly or wrongly, that he ought not to go against the wishes of both his parents, sadly gave up the long-cherished plan and prepared to settle down to do what he could at home. So, when a deputation from Castledawson came and asked him to be their minister, he agreed and was ordained over that congregation on the 11th of September, 1888.

But experiences were to repeat themselves in this little country town in the strangest way.

Fifty years before, the minister of Castledawson had been just such another brilliant young student; and when, after the amalgamation of two separated communions into the Presbyterian Church of Ireland in the year 1840, it was decided that the first work for the united Church to undertake should be that of a foreign mission of its own, it was to this young Mr. Glasgow that the Convener of the newly started mission turned, and the young minister of Castledawson became one of the first two missionaries ever sent officially by an Irish Church to India. But Henderson, when he accepted charge of Castledawson, had evidently put away from him all hope of ever being able to see his great ambition fulfilled. He settled down cheerfully, anxious only to be a good under-shepherd and feed his Master's sheep and lambs, especially the lambs.

The first thing he found was that the congregation was saddled with a debt of £100, which had been lying heavy on it for twenty years, and he determined to clear it off without more delay. A few months' hard work, and the infection of his enthusiasm saw the last shilling wiped off. It was the first of those many efforts which he afterwards made in India with such extraordinary success to raise the needed funds for the work he had in hand.

But it did not require an effort of this kind to endear him at once to his congregation. He had an almost magical gift of making himself liked wherever he was, and it generally began with the children. There was a school attached to the congregation of Castledawson, as there is to most churches in Ireland, and it took the children of the neighbourhood no time to discover that the new minister was a special friend of theirs, indeed one of themselves; and this discovery was soon reflected in an increased attendance at school on such a scale, that, no sooner was the £100 debt cleared off, than a fresh effort had to be made to provide funds to enlarge the school house. There were seventy-eight children when he came; in six months the numbers were nearly doubled, and in a year and a half they had risen to 234.

A characteristic story is told of him at this time. There happened to be a vacancy for a teacher in a neighbouring school, and Henderson managed to secure this bit of promotion for one of his own teachers. But realising how difficult the first few days would be for a shy girl, he quietly took his lunch in his pocket like the children and marched off to the distant school; and this he did for several days in succession, staying in school from morning till evening, until he felt sure she could manage by herself.

No wonder people began coming regularly to Church as they hadn't done for years, while school and Sunday School were always more and more crowded. Someone asked him once how it was done, but he only laughed and said: "Oh, it's just because we all love each other and we're working for the Lord." But it was the kind of love that took account not of numbers but of individuals. He was never known all his life to meet anyone on a country road without talking to them, and before long he would have found out all about them and their troubles, for he had that peculiar art of sympathy that drew you out to tell him things, though he never bothered you with any troubles of his own.

Nor was the missionary interest forgotten. On one occasion Dr. Glasgow, now living in retirement after his years of service in India, came down to his old congregation and told them of the work to which they had let him go half a century before. It must have started once more the feeling of regret in the mind of his successor and the wish that the way had not been closed in his own case; but closed he believed it to be.

Then one day came news that saddened the whole Church. In the very centre of the Mission Field which has fallen to the lot of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland lies the famous city of Broach, one of the most ancient cities in the

world, from which King Solomon is said to have got his apes and peacocks. It had always been the wish of the well-known Convener of the Foreign Mission, Dr. Fleming Stevenson, to see this city occupied for Christ, and though he did not live to gain his desire, he was able, just before his death in 1886, to secure the appointment to the Indian Mission of two of the most brilliant students of their day, one of whom, the Rev. Thomas M'Anlis, was eventually sent to occupy this city of Broach. His proficiency in the language, combined with a quite unusual modesty and charm, marked him out as likely to be one of the great missionaries of his day, and in particular his love for children and sympathy with them enabled him to lay a good foundation for the work in Broach by starting Sunday Schools and gaining the affection of the new generation. And then suddenly came the news that this brilliant young missionary was dead. It seemed to stir the whole Church, and younger men could hardly help hearing the urgent call to foreign service.

It was about this time that the then Convener of the Foreign Mission, the Rev. William Park, paid a visit to Castledawson, and had some conversation with its minister, in the course of which Henderson told him of his original desire to go to India as a missionary.

"What do you think about it now?" asked the Convener. "Oh," was the reply, "I'm settled here now."

Nevertheless he promised to think over the question once more and to come and see the Convener later on in Belfast.

But to think the matter over was fatal to his peace of mind as minister of Castledawson. And, when, one day, he was over at Fair View and saw his mother, and found that she no longer opposed his going, his mind was made up at once. "Go, and God go with you," was what she said, and his father said the same. So it was not long before the minister of Castledawson turned up at Mr. Park's house in Belfast, and when he returned to his manse, it was as all but formally a missionary designate to India.

Curiously enough a friend and neighbour of his, J. H. Fitzsimons, a student under the care of the Presbytery which included Castledawson in its bounds, was designated to India at the same time as Henderson. Illness however intervened to prevent his going to India, and he later went to China, where he died. He was engaged to a daughter of the Rev. William Chestnut, formerly minister of Tralee, and Robert Henderson went down there in the autumn to be best man at the wedding. His friend had already introduced him when on a visit to Belfast, to some of the other

sisters, and this wedding at Tralee proved doubly happy, for Robert Henderson became engaged to the youngest of the sisters, Miss Kathleen Chestnut, and a happier or more ideally suited pair surely never laboured, loved and laughed through life on the Mission field.

The congregation at Castledawson must have learned of their beloved young minister's decision with dismay, and yet not without a sense of pride, since for the second time in their history they were allowed to give their minister to the needs of India. The designation service was held at Castledawson just before Christmas, and among those who took part in the service was the old minister of the congregation of fifty years before, the Rev. Dr. Glasgow. It was a great thing for the new missionary to be sent out under such auspices and to be allowed to feel himself truly in the succession.

Then came the inevitable good-byes, no easy task to a minister and people, who, even in sixteen months had so grown to love one another. Indeed, the poor minister tried to get out of it altogether, and when, on the last Sunday, he arrived at Sunday School, and the superintendent said to him: "You must say good-bye to them to-day, it's your only chance," he miserably replied: "Oh, I couldn't."

"But they would be really hurt if you didn't

say just a few words," was the response, so there was nothing for it but to get up and try. But the moment he arose, he saw all the teachers and most of the scholars feeling for their handkerchiefs, and after standing up for a minute without saying a word, he abruptly sat down. "Didn't I tell you I couldn't?" he said. It was just what would have happened in any station where he had been in India. It was said of someone that he had a heart like a hotel. Henderson's heart had certainly room for an unlimited number of guests, but he gave himself to his friends with an abandon that drew out their wholehearted love. No one would have been content to say that they liked him, you simply loved him with all your heart and all your soul.

CHAPTER III

Missionary Apprenticeship

HENDERSON reached India in February, 1890, at the end of the cold weather, and had immediately to take up responsible work. This was contrary to the approved practice of most Missions, which is to send their missionaries out in the autumn (so as to give them the pleasant cold weather in which to acclimatise), and to set them free for the first year to learn the language. But in his case the smallness of the staff necessitated a breach of both rules. The Rev. G. P. Taylor had just gone home on furlough, and Henderson had to step into his place, the moment he arrived, as Principal of the High School at Ahmadabad. This school had been started a quarter of a century before, and had already, like its older sister in Surat, done a great work in influencing the educated classes in favour of the Mission and all that it implied. Mission High Schools may not have produced many actual converts in India, but they have had a remarkable success in changing the whole attitude of the educated classes and attracting them to the moral principles professed

by Christian people. It is a curious testimony to their influence that in India to-day the language, the sentiments and even the illustrations of public men, either in speeches or newspaper articles, are those of Christians, though they themselves may have no conscious sympathy with the Christian religion. In High Schools, as at present conducted, the entire instruction is in English, even when the masters are themselves Indians, so it was possible for a missionary straight out from home to start work in the school at once.

Henderson's love of boys and his sympathy with them stood him in good stead in this educational work. The numbers rapidly went up, for boys soon discover a friend, and in India it is the boys rather than their parents who decide to what school they shall go. He was strict enough and made his boys work hard, but he had the faculty of making work interesting. He started a Debating Society, which became so popular that the boys from other schools asked leave to join it, but it was on the Scripture lessons that he concentrated all his enthusiasm. "Some of the pleasantest hours of my life have been spent in the Scripture classes," he once said. The school did well in matriculation and other important examinations, but the boys excelled in their Scripture knowledge. No less than seventeen boys, he records, got full marks in the



REV. ROBERT AND MRS. HENDERSON AND TWO OF THEIR CHILDREN.

annual Scripture examination, and a large number got over seventy per cent.

Miss Chestnut came out in the autumn of 1890, and the two were married in Bombay on the 22nd of November, and after only a few days' honeymoon at Lanauli, they settled down together in Ahmadabad.

A year later they were sent to start Mission work again in Broach, which had been without a missionary since Mr. M'Anlis' death more than two years before. It was here that Henderson's real missionary work began, but those years in the High School had been a good introduction to his life in India; he had got to know something of the Indian character, and to know it is to love it; and in spite of the difficulty of learning a foreign language when one is teaching one's own, he had become fluent in Gujarati. Also he had made many friendships that were to last for a lifetime, and in later years he often met Indian officials in different places who were proud to introduce themselves as his old pupils, and did all they could to help him.

The traveller who visits Broach to-day will find a well-equipped Mission station, with church and schools, Mission houses, and an up-to-date Women's Hospital. But there was nothing of all this when Mr. and Mrs. Henderson went there at the end of 1891. They were able to

rent a house to live in, though it was badly in need of repair, and they used to drive about the country in a tonga, the Indian dog-cart, visiting the villages and making friends with the people. This was not an altogether easy task. The soil round Broach is better fitted for growing the famous Broach cotton than for providing good riding or driving roads, and the villages were, many of them, peopled by a not particularly friendly type of Muhammadan; indeed, generally speaking the Muhammadans in India, for all their monotheism, are less inclined to be friendly to the Christian missionary than the polytheistic Hindus, whose creed admits already of so many objects of reverence, that they have little objection to hearing of yet another. But, while there are many Muhammadan villages, the district as a whole is predominantly Hindu, and it contains one of the famous Hindu places of pilgrimage, situated on the banks of the Narbada river, some ten miles from Broach, where, at the beginning of the cold weather, a great religious fair is held. As many as 50,000 people congregate there, sleeping wherever they can find room on the crowded ground. The fair lasts a week, and gives the missionary an excellent opportunity of proclaiming his message to people who might otherwise never have a chance of hearing it. When Mr. Henderson first visited it, some Christian

workers had come from Surat to help, and all the week they were busy, preaching to the crowds that collect on the smallest excuse, and selling gospels and tracts by the hundred, so that, when the fair was over, the book-boxes were nearly empty.

The cold season and the hot weather that follows it are the time for touring in the districts, but the rainy season, which roughly corresponds to our summer at home, does not allow of work of that kind. For one thing, it is not easy to get about when the roads are flooded and the lanes are rushing rivers; but, apart from that, the cultivator is too busy in the rainy season to have time to listen to an itinerating preacher. But there is plenty of work at that and other times to be done in the town or city where the missionary has his headquarters. In a place like Broach Mr. Henderson had no difficulty in finding adventure whenever he went out to look for it. There were a dozen places where one could find room to preach and a crowd to preach to, and when the preaching was over, the little books that one of the Indian helpers carried in his handkerchief would be spread out, and they seldom failed to attract purchasers. Occasionally, indeed, the apparently eager seeker after truth would turn out to be an enemy, and after making the workers' hearts glad by buying a number of books, would

jeeringly set them alight or tear them in pieces; but this did not generally meet with the approval of the crowd, for in India the printed word is held to be sacred, and actions like this only serve to bring people over to your side. Henderson never lost his temper with the crowd, no matter what they might do, and so established from their point of view his right to be a religious teacher. Indeed, nowhere more than in India was a sunny, unruffled temper like his a more important asset.

Not that things never happened that would have provoked a weaker man. On one occasion, no sooner had the missionary and his helpers begun to preach in a suitable part of the crowded bazaar, than a rival preacher took up his stand close by and began to abuse the Christians and their religion for all he was worth. He was a Muhammadan convert from Hinduism, and spent his time going about in this way from place to place, abusing Christianity. On this occasion he so excited his hearers that they rushed in among Mr. Henderson's crowd and tried to prevent them from listening to the missionary. Then someone began to shout that the Christians were trying to start a row, and serious trouble might have arisen, had not the missionary and his helpers stood their ground imperturbably, till it was plain that they at least were not the cause of the trouble, and presently everything quieted down.

But all this helped to make the new religion better known, and people began to talk about it all over the city; questions would be asked and answered, and the truth about the Christian message better explained. Not long afterwards a young man came to see the missionary and told him that in one single district of the city there were seven or eight high-caste Hindus who would have liked to become Christians, but for the loss of caste it would have entailed; and he found out that it was the discussions started by this open-air preaching that had made them begin to compare their own religion with Christianity and eventually to realise where the truth lay.

But he would have liked to set going some form of work more permanent in its results than casual street preaching, and one day, while he was wondering how best to start a Mission School, a deputation arrived at the Mission House, to ask him to start a High School. His pleasure at the incident was not lessened by the fact that the deputation consisted of schoolboys. But his joy was short-lived, for on enquiry he discovered that these were all boys who had failed in their annual examinations, and had hit on this as an excellent method of taking their revenge on their headmaster for denying them their remove!

But, though a High School was not started, there was always the possibility of Sunday Schools.

Going through the streets, Mr. Henderson used sometimes to hear the familiar strains of some hymn like "There is a happy land," and on enquiry would discover that the singer had been in Mr. M'Anlis's Sunday School. So it was not long before he found an opportunity of starting Sunday School work once more in Broach. One school was for outcaste children, and before the school had been long started, no less than three of the boys came and told him that they would like to become Christians. Another school, started for caste children, gave promise of being a great success. For some weeks as many as seventy boys came Sunday by Sunday, but after this they rapidly dropped off, till at length the school had to be closed. It was only afterwards that he discovered the reason: the master of the day school which these boys attended had beaten them for attending a Christian Sunday School class.

Meanwhile life had not been without its shadows in the missionaries' own home. Their first child, a girl named Kathleen, born before they left Ahmadabad, had taken ill in the rains, a very dangerous season for babies in India, and as it got no better, they took it to Surat for further advice. But the child got worse, and died in Surat, and the missionaries had to return alone to a desolate home. Later on a second

daughter, May, was born in Broach, and in the years that followed three more girls and a boy were added. It was a very happy family, though, like most missionary families, a scattered one, and writing only a day or two before his death their father said that he had never had a single moment's anxiety from any of them.

But Broach was not to be the Hendersons' home for long. Two years after they went there, the furlough of the missionary at Borsad fell due, and Mr. Henderson was sent to take his place.

CHAPTER IV

Borsad

BORSAD is just a small country town, situated in the Charotar district of Gujarāt, and of no special historic or commercial importance, but from the missionary point of view it has a most interesting history, that links our Mission to the work of William Carey.

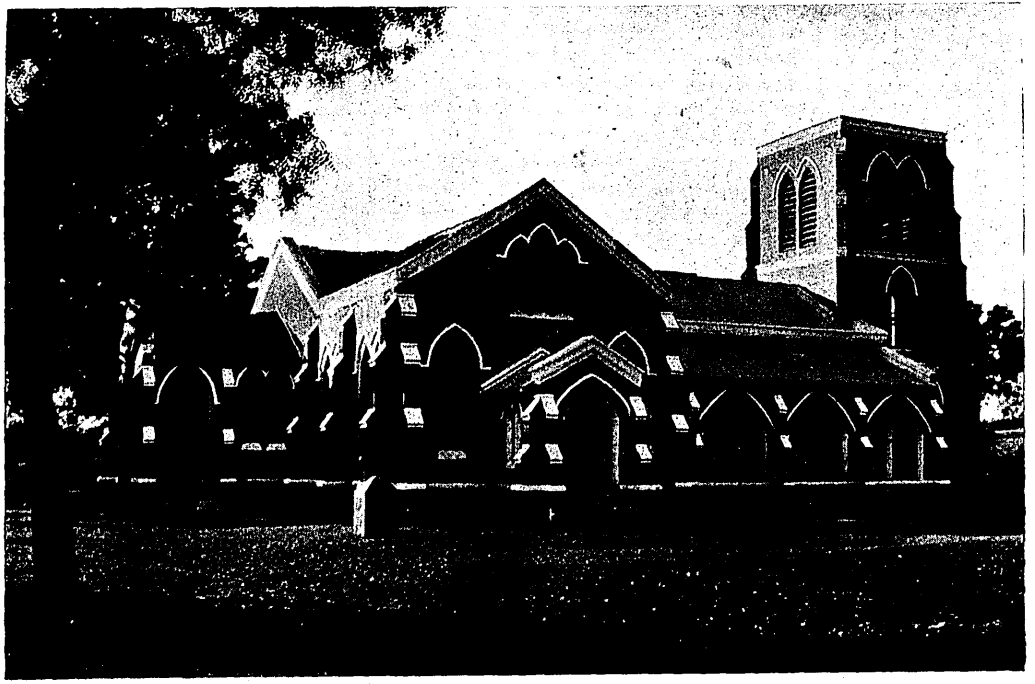
Among the people influenced by Carey was a young Armenian, who eventually came to Baroda, where he was employed as a clerk in a Government office. Though not officially a missionary, he did what he could to help the people round him, and every now and then would obtain from the London Missionary Society's press in Surat a parcel of tracts and good books, which he would distribute to anyone who cared to have them, and in this and other ways a number of Christian books, and even a Bible or two, found their way into the villages of that part of Gujarāt, where the great river Mahi flows through steep banks to the Gulf of Cambay. These books contained on their cover an invitation to anyone interested in these things to visit the missionaries at Surat, and one

day two men, with books in their hands, found their way to the Mission House at Surat, in spite of all efforts made to prevent them reaching it. The missionary who welcomed them was the Rev. William Clarkson, and to him they told their story, how, after reading the account of the Magi, they had seen a meteor in the sky, which seemed to them a confirmation of the truth of the story, and an indication that the Saviour they had read about was soon to return, and they were anxious to learn more about him. They added that a good many people in the district from which they came were reading these books, and if only the missionary would visit them, they themselves would be baptised, and possibly many others also. So Mr. Clarkson decided to go.

These were the days of bullock-carts, travelling at the rate of two miles an hour; and the perils of robbers and perils of rivers across which there was no bridge, and many another danger, while they make interesting reading now, must have been very trying to a party of travellers which included a mother and little babies. But at length they all reached Baroda, and after staying there for a little and encouraging the good man who had made such a fine use of his opportunities, they started, with a tent, on a tour of all that district, visiting various places and baptising a number of people.

One day a religious leader belonging to the outcastes, decided to join them, and was eventually baptised, and the infant church had to face the question of whether caste and outcaste would consent to be members one of another. The mere idea was shocking to ordinary Indian sentiment, and a man might well claim to be a Christian and truly to love his Lord, and yet hesitate to eat and drink and share his seat in church with these Untouchables. It was a crisis in the history of the church, and as the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper had not yet been celebrated, though a good many people had by now been baptised, it was felt that the time had come to make the great test. But it was thought better not to hold so critical a celebration in any of the towns and villages to which the converts belonged, so the town of Borsad was chosen as a central place to which all could come. A friendly official let the missionary have the use of an upper room in the old fort of Borsad, some years ago, alas, pulled down, and to this place came from towns and villages many miles distant those who were brave enough and enough in love with their Lord to forget all the distinctions to which they had been brought up, and there, for the first time in all that district, the Lord's Supper was celebrated.

The church, being now built on a solid



BORSAD CHURCH.

foundation, and with its doors open to welcome anyone, of whatever caste, who was willing to come in, grew and flourished, and there are thousands of Christians in that district to-day. Mr. Clarkson afterwards built a little hamlet, just outside the town of Borsad, where converts who had been driven out of their homes could live and worship God in peace. He called it Kāshi Wādi, the Beautiful Garden, and there it is, only a good deal larger, to this day.

It happened that the London Missionary Society had eventually to withdraw from both Surat and Borsad, and its work at both places was handed over to the Irish Presbyterian Church, which has carried it on ever since.

It was to this town of Borsad that Mr. Henderson now came, and it was here that he did his greatest work.

Something like fifty years had passed since those men came to Surat with tracts in their hands to beg the missionaries to come over and help them, and a good deal had happened since then. The Christians could no longer have been gathered together in one room; there were nearly five hundred of them, and another hundred or so who were connected with the church, though not yet baptised, and there was now a church in Kāshi Wādi, where services were held each Sunday. Then, about seven miles

away, there was a little Christian village, started by the Rev. W. W. Brown, and called after his Irish home, Brookhill. There was a church there, too, and a third church at a village still further away, called Khadānā. Then there were quite a number of schools all over the district. In Borsad itself there were two boarding-houses, one for boys and one for girls, to which Christian children could be sent from the villages where there was no good school for them; and besides these boarders there were orphan boys and girls. They all, boys and girls, went in those days to the same school, and it must have been an astonishment to the people round, who hardly thought girls ought to be taught to read at all, to find a girl as often as not top of the class.

Besides these, there were a number of schools for Hindu and Muhammadan children, where they learnt of the love of God. Indeed, enquiry would probably show that most of those who have become Christians in this or any other district of our Mission had been taught in Mission schools. There were three such schools in Borsad at this time, one for girls, which was in charge of the Mission ladies, one for outcaste children who would not be allowed inside an ordinary school, and one, where English was taught, to which many of the leading people of the town had begun to send their boys. Then

there was a school in the little Christian village of Brookhill, and schools in four other villages for more of these outcaste children. In these villages there would be a Christian preacher or teacher living with his wife and family, and besides looking after the school, he would go about among the nearer villages telling anybody who cared to listen to him the great news of redemption. On Sundays they would hold services, generally on the verandahs of their houses, and Sunday Schools too—there were altogether six Sunday Schools in the district, with 300 pupils on the rolls, and in Brookhill the older people came along with their children.

That was the sort of station Mr. Henderson found one day in February, 1894, when he arrived with his family to take over charge from the Rev. R. Boyd, then going home on his first furlough. He had not, like Mr. Clarkson, to come in a bullock cart; about three hours in the train had brought them from Broach to a little station on the main line called Vāsād, from whence a twelve mile drive took them to Borsad. Since then a branch line and a motor service from another station has brought Borsad nearer still, though it is never likely to be on the railway itself.

CHAPTER V

At Work

MR. HENDERSON was very much encouraged as he went about among the villages and got to know the people. "Borsad," he said, "is undoubtedly one of the best centres for Mission work in the whole of Gujarāt. In it and in the villages around it the gospel has for the past fifty years been leavening the dead mass of heathenism, and signs are not wanting that a great change has taken place in the religious beliefs of the people and in their attitude towards Christianity. Many of them are not far from the Kingdom of God, and all that is needed to bring them into it is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who alone can convince men of sin and of righteousness and of judgment and lead them to Christ."

And so for a few years he went about the districts on his horse Mike (one of the best of missionaries that horse was!) encouraging the lonely preachers and teachers in the different little village schools, preaching in the streets and villages, examining the schools, putting up

a few houses here and seeing to the digging of a well there, teaching his classes and generally doing enough work for three people. And as a result he was able after only two years to report that the six Sunday Schools had grown to eleven, with 500 names on the rolls, that the ordinary schools, besides the English one, had grown to thirteen, and that several people had been added to the church by baptism.

But indeed to try and follow Mr. Henderson in his work up and down the Borsad district during the next few years is like trying to keep up with a motor. Simply to read about it takes your breath away. There was never a treat like going to stay with the Hendersons at Borsad.

Wherever those two were, the sun seemed always to be shining. The house was more full of laughter and fun than any I ever knew, and fullest of all of love. It was a curious thing, that you didn't always notice at the time, but generally remembered afterwards as you thought it over, that you never heard an unkind word about anyone as long as you stayed with them; or if you did, it wasn't either of them who said it, and they would be sure in the kindest possible way, so that no one should feel censured, to say something pleasant or excusing about the person who had been criticised. Mr. Henderson would take you about with him as he did his work, and

you would think it was all play. He would take you perhaps to preach in the town, or to one of the schools, and as soon as people saw him coming their faces would light up. He had a kind, pleasant word for everyone, and if he found anyone looking sad or glum or discouraged, he would never leave them till he had them laughing. One day he would be sure to take you to Brookhill. At this time there were three principal out stations, Brookhill, Khadānā and Poradā, but Brookhill was the nearest. Mike would be harnessed in the dogcart, and off we would go, sometimes spending the day there and only coming back in time for dinner in the evening. Brookhill is a village inhabited entirely by Christians.

About the time we are speaking of, Mr. Henderson built a school-house to the memory of the founder of the village, the Rev. W. W. Brown. The idea originated with a servant of Mr. Brown's who desired to commemorate one "who had spent all he had for the glory of his Saviour," and Brookhill, which he started, has ever since been like a little lighthouse among the villages round. Mr. Henderson was always very fond of the Sunday School there, which was attended by practically everybody. "It is pleasant," he wrote once, "to see the fathers and mothers coming in along with the children and taking their places in the different classes. Nobody

seems to consider himself or herself too big or too old or too wise to come to the Sunday School and repeat texts of Scripture and questions out of the Catechism and learn a little more about the great truths the Bible contains."

Khadānā was generally too far to go to for the day; when the missionaries went there, they stayed for a week or two, or even longer. The Indian worker in charge there, who afterwards became the first pastor of that little congregation, was Mr. Lazarus Tejpal. He was born, not in Gujarāt, but in Malwa, a considerable distance away. When a famine came to his home, he and several other boys and girls were sent to our missionaries. He had a friend called Thomā (Thomas), and they learnt in the same class at school, studied the long course for the ministry together, passed their final examination in the same year, were licensed to preach together, and finally (some time after this) were ordained in the same year, the one over a congregation near Anand and the other in Khadānā. The Rev. Thomābhāi has retired, but Lazarusbhai still works away as hard as ever. Those who have worked with him know exactly what Henderson felt like when he wrote: — "Mr. Lazarus Tejpal is most industrious himself, and he always insists on giving lazy people like me plenty of work to do! I know I am never

allowed to waste much time when I am at Khadānā! The usual programme for Sunday is (1) A Sunday School early in the morning, which is attended by the children of three different day schools. (2) The morning service at eight or eight-thirty. (3) A Bible Class at noon, which is attended by grown-up people residing in Khadānā. (4) The evening service at four-thirty and (5) preaching in the village in the evening. This last item is, I think, added on for my benefit."

There is a story still told in Khadānā to show the new missionary's persistent faith. The water in the well in the Mission compound there was so bad that it became dangerous to drink it. Attempts were made in four different places to get better results, but with no success. Anyone else would have given in, but Henderson insisted on having one more try. An old man in the village, who at first declared that no good water would ever be found in that compound was induced to walk over it, and at length, pointing to a corner where a certain weed grew, said: "You might try there; that plant only grows where there is sweet water near."

There was tremendous excitement over the digging, as may be believed, and when they came down to where the ground was getting damp, the diggers, who had been promised a special

reward of sweets if good water should be found, would hardly leave off to go and eat their dinner; and sure enough, when they got down to water and tasted it, it was good and sweet and remained so for many years. So Henderson's faith was justified. Lazarusbhai used to take Henderson round his village schools for outcaste children. There were six such schools at this time, and the missionary was very pleased with them all. "It is wonderful," he says, "how much some of the children have learnt in two or three years. I'm certain that I never made half so much progress whilst at school as the children attending these schools have done." And the schools did more than just teach the children to read and write, for he goes on :—"These schools are already beginning to bear fruit. Last year several boys educated in them received baptism, and this year two more have been baptised."

The Church at Khadānā was attended by Christians from other villages too, but some of these were too far off for the people to come regularly. In one of them the people, "have now a collection of their own every Sunday. Even if they cannot go to Church, they give something, and those who cannot give money give a little grain."

Khadānā had a little church, or rather prayer

room, of its own at this time, but at Poradā, the third out-station, there was no place for the Christians to meet, except, presumably, the verandah of a house. So even before Mr. Henderson was put in charge of Borsad, it was decided that a Church ought to be built there as soon as possible. But the building of it and the getting together of the money needed, cost Mr. Henderson a lot of time and hard work, and it was a great day in the history of the Borsad Mission when the Poradā Church was at last ready to be dedicated to the worship of God. Christians came far and wide, from Borsad and Brookhill and Khadānā and many another village, till there were four hundred of them crowding the new church, which could hardly hold them all. It added to the universal joy that the very first thing to be done after the opening of the church was the baptism of twenty-one grown people and thirteen babies.

A great event each month, in Borsad, was always the monthly meeting held on the first of each month when the workers from the district came in with their accounts. "The discussions," says Mr. Henderson, "are usually very interesting, and in addition to the speeches, we have at almost every meeting, an original poem or two."

CHAPTER VI

Every-day Incidents

SOMETIMES, as he went about the country visiting different places here and there, Henderson had some rather amusing experiences.

Once he was asked by a relative of an Indian Prince to have some tea. "Such tea as I had to drink," he says. "I have often in villages had to drink tea that wasn't very good, but the tea I got that afternoon had a flavour all its own. Some people think that castor oil is terribly hard to take, but castor oil was nothing to that tea. And yet I had to drink it! My host wouldn't take any excuse. I said I wasn't thirsty. "No matter," said he, "people often drink tea when they aren't thirsty." I couldn't very well deny that. Waiting until it cooled properly, I philosophically drank it off as I would quinine. I'm glad to be able to say that, though it was very nasty to drink, it didn't do me any harm."

Another time, when they had gone to preach in a village, and had taken up their stand at the usual place, nobody seemed willing to come near them for some time. They did gather in the

end, when they were sure who it was who had come to visit their village, and it afterwards turned out that the reason they were afraid to come at first was that a rumour had been spread that, in order to stop the plague, which had just made its appearance in Bombay, people were going about trying to poison children so as to appease the plague goddess!

No days were happier than the Sundays when the missionary found new converts ready to be baptised. Most of them had learned about Christ in one or other of the little Mission schools which Henderson was always trying to start in the villages. Most of them, too, were Dheds, as the biggest class of outcastes in our Mission district are called. But not all. For instance, there was an old Christian in Borsad who, from his heathen days, had been known as a Buggat, or religious leader. He belonged to the Koli caste, who are mostly labourers, but they would be very much offended indeed if they were taken for outcastes, just because they were poor. (In fact, caste has very little to do with whether you are rich or poor. Some of the outcastes live in very good houses, and you will often see a Brahman in rags.) This man had a nephew, who heard in some way of this new religion and thought about it for a long time. At last he decided that he would ask for baptism.

But the very day he arrived in Kāshi Wādi, some of his caste fellows came and tried to carry off his children. Meanwhile his wife was kept a prisoner by her brother. But Bahadur, true to his name, which means Brave, said the children were his, not theirs, and he refused to let them be taken back to heathenism; so these people had to go away without persuading him to give up his new religion.

Soon after this, the caste held a meeting and passed a resolution that no Koli should do any work of any kind for the Christians. But the very next day four Koli masons and several labourers came to work as usual, so that too was of no use. The man's wife soon got free and joined her husband, and she learnt so diligently, that when the time came for them to be baptised, she knew far more than he did about what Christianity meant. That must have been a memorable Sunday when Bahadur and his wife and all his family, and several other people besides, were received by baptism into the church of Christ.

One day, when Mr. Henderson visited Khadānā, Lazarusbhai told him that several people who wanted to be baptised would come to be examined; no less than thirteen of them passed the necessary test and next day were baptised, while the rest were told to wait a little and learn more, so that they might be baptised some other

time. But only a few weeks later Lazarusbhai asked the missionary to come again, for there were more candidates ready; and sure enough, there were more ready than the first time. Altogether there were twenty-seven people, besides children, baptised those two Sundays, and the story of some of them is an interesting one.

There is a large village called Nār, from which some of the very first converts of fifty years earlier had come, and a few years before the time we are speaking of, some of the outcaste people in this village had given in their names and asked to be enrolled as learners. A school was started for them, but their enthusiasm only lasted for a little while, and by degrees they all dropped off. And then one day, something happened to remind these people of what they had missed, and seven or eight families decided to go to Khadānā and see Lazarusbhai and have a talk with him about the whole thing; when, who should suddenly appear in their village but Lazarusbhai himself. Well, the school was opened again, and a night school for those who were busy at work all day, and soon thirty-one people, young and old, were learning with the greatest enthusiasm.

But this did not suit the big farmers of the place, for whom these poor people worked, and who considered them almost as their hereditary serfs. They feared that these

people if they became Christians would get too independent, and would refuse to work on Sundays, and perhaps to work for them at all. So they sent for them to the Chora, or village hall, and told them to give up Christianity. When all stood firm, they were told to stoop down till the tips of their fingers touched their toes, and to remain in that position.

They were kept thus for two hours and more, and not allowed to move, unless they would promise to give up being Christians. Not content with that, their masters ordered some of them to be beaten, but still not one of them would give in. No wonder, when it came to the question of their baptism, it was decided that such brave men might safely be baptised, even though they had not undergone the usual period of probation. They had to bear more persecution after that, but they still continued to stand firm, coming most regularly to church at Khadānā three miles away, and staying from morning till evening, so that they might attend a special class between services.

Things did not always go as happily as that, of course, and sometimes the missionary, as he visited one or other of his out-stations, would be greeted by the sad news that some person, or some family even, had gone back on all they had been taught and returned to heathenism.

Perhaps that is not the fairest way to put it, for in most cases these people had no desire to start worshipping idols again, or anything of that kind. It generally came from their being in a hurry to marry off their daughters, for in India a man does not consider his daughters provided for till he has arranged for their marriage (indeed among some castes so great is the anxiety that the daughters shall not by any chance remain unmarried, that they marry them when they are infants even, perhaps to a bridegroom who is also an infant). Or perhaps it is his son and not his daughter that the father is anxious about. Where is he to get a wife for him ? And so they arranged for their children's marriage with a heathen. This not only means that the parents of the heathen wife or husband are likely to influence the child and prevent it from being a good Christian, but the actual marriage ceremony cannot be performed without the worship of idols, in which all join; so these heathen marriages mean in practice that the Christian father and mother have been joining in the worship of idols; and so they have to be solemnly put out of the Christian Church, till they confess their sin and ask to be taken back. And every now and then the Missionary has to be told sad stories of that kind, as he goes about and asks after this or that member of the congregation.

CHAPTER VII

Growth of the Church

THE care of this large district with its growing Church was enough in itself to keep any man busy. But Henderson was always thinking out new plans for developing the work.

He had not been long in Borsad before he began to see the advantage of starting some industrial work in connection with the school there; and by and by he got hold of an old shoemaker to come and teach four of the older boys that trade. Each boy used to go to school one day and learn shoemaking the next, the old man having two pupils at a time. As he got less than 7s. 6d. a month as pay, and whatever the boys could make was sold for the benefit of the school, it could hardly be called an expensive experiment. Nor was it much of a success at the time, but it was the beginning of the important Industrial School there is at Borsad now.

Then there was the Christian Endeavour Society, which he started in 1897, with branches at Brookhill and Khadānā. It led to several

of the boys and young men, both at Borsad and Brookhill, going out in their spare time to give their testimony in the villages round, and doing anything else they could to help the spread of God's Kingdom.

The Scripture Union was another thing Henderson was very keen on, and when first Mr. B. Herklots and later Mr. R. T. Archibald came to Borsad to hold meetings, nothing delighted Henderson so much as when a large number of people joined the Scripture Union, because he hoped that in that way both young and old would get into the habit of reading their Bibles regularly and in order.

All this time the schools were growing and increasing. It will be remembered that there were altogether about ten Mission Schools in the district when he came there; but six years later there were thirty-five! He used sometimes to give prizes to the teachers of whichever three schools had done best during the year, and that made each school want to do as well as it possibly could. There were also thirteen night schools, and several of those who were baptised from time to time had been pupils there.

And all this time the church was growing and increasing. When Mr. Henderson came to Borsad, there were 610 people who called themselves Christians; six years later they had grown

to 1842, though not quite half of these had been actually baptised.

A great many of those new Christians belonged to that district round Khadānā, and it must have been a great satisfaction to everyone when the Presbytery decided that it was time, if the people there were willing, to let them have a pastor of their own. It need hardly be said that they chose Mr. Lazarus Tejpal, who had worked among them for so long, with such industry and zeal, and it was a great day for Khadānā when the Presbytery met there for his ordination, five days before Christmas, 1898.

Before a congregation among us can have a pastor of their own, they have to promise to pay so much towards his salary, and the Presbytery decides whether what they have promised is enough. More than once the people had asked to have Lazarusbhai as their pastor, but they had not promised enough for his support. However, this time they did, and the Presbytery added some more money from the Pastor's fund, so all the difficulties were settled. The ordination was held in the little old Khadānā Church; it was a very happy and a very encouraging day, and it had a very happy and encouraging sequel.

One day towards the end of the year 1898, Lazarusbhai was going to a fair a good way from

his home, and he stayed the night at a little town called Sojitra. It was in the territory of the Gaikwar of Baroda, but Gaikwari territory is so mixed up with British in that part of the world, that you never really know which you are in, unless you ask. There had been a few people in Sojitrā from time to time who became Christians; but they were very few, and any Christians there were there just went to Khadānā to church when they could, though that was eight miles away. But on this particular night when Lazarus stayed in the village a great many people came to see him, and they talked together about religion till midnight, and made him promise to spend another night there on his return. Meanwhile they had been thinking about things, and when he was on his way back from the Fair, these people definitely expressed the desire to become Christians. They belonged to the outcastes, and Lazarus knew he must be very careful, because these poor people are often so oppressed, that they might threaten to turn Christian just to frighten their employers, and not because they really meant to. However, early in the next year, when Henderson came to the village and saw them, 130 people actually gave in their names as wishing for instruction, and a few days after that a Christian teacher was sent to live there. Not many months later their

number had grown to 250, and they had themselves bought a lamp and a gong and a chair as furniture for the services, which were held on the verandah of the teacher's house. Henderson saw the principal farmers of the place, who employed these people as labourers, and got them to promise not to interfere with anybody who wanted to become a Christian.

It is interesting to look back and see how the work there began. It was through some of these people having relatives who were Christians; and they heard so much from them about Christ, that it made them want to share the happiness of their Christian friends.

One more fact of interest falls to be mentioned before this chapter closes, the starting of work at Cambay. Cambay is one of the real old cities of India. It was probably there in Solomon's time; but nowadays the sea has left it high and dry, and it is not such an important place as it used to be. All the same, it is a large town, under a Muhammadan ruler, called the Nawab. Missionaries had paid visits to it at different times, and because the sea air makes it cooler than Borsad, they sometimes used to go and stay there for a little, in fact the Rev. Dr. G. P. Taylor was born there when his father was missionary at Borsad. But up to now there was no one living there to work regularly among the

people. Henderson had often wished that work could be started there, but somehow the opportunity never came. However, at last, in the year 1899, there was a suitable man ready to be sent, and what was more, a house was found for him to live in. This last was the greater difficulty, for in a Native State it is often impossible to buy land, and there may be no one willing even to let a house, because they think, if only they can keep the Christian teachers out of the place, no one will become a Christian there. But God's time had come, a house was found, and by and by land was got and a bungalow built on it, and Cambay is now one of our regular Mission Stations.

So everything seemed to be going along happily and prosperously. And then suddenly one of the most terrible calamities in her history burst on Gujarāt.

CHAPTER VIII

The Great Famine

It was something no one had ever expected.

India is a country of famines, and hardly a year passes but there are bad crops and consequent scarcity somewhere or other; and as more people live by the land in India than perhaps in any other country in the world, a good or a bad monsoon makes more difference there than anywhere. Lazarus himself as a small boy had come to know about Christ through a famine, which drove him from his home in Malwa and brought him at last to our Mission Orphanage in Borsad more than thirty years before the time we are speaking of. But Gujarāt was one of those places that always seemed to escape. There was a tradition of a famine there away back in history, but so long ago that the people had forgotten all about it. And so, when in the year 1899 the rain failed to come at the proper time, everyone just said how late it was, and what poor crops there would be, if things did not improve; but no

one thought there was any danger of the rain not coming at all; but that in fact was just what happened.

And the worst of it was, that that great calamity had not come alone. Earlier in the year there had been an outbreak of plague, the same dreadful disease that we read of in the Bible, when the Philistines took the ark that they had captured about from place to place, and wherever it went came the rats that bring plague, and the people died, the same scourge as the Black Death in the Middle Ages, and the Plague that was only stopped by the great fire of London.

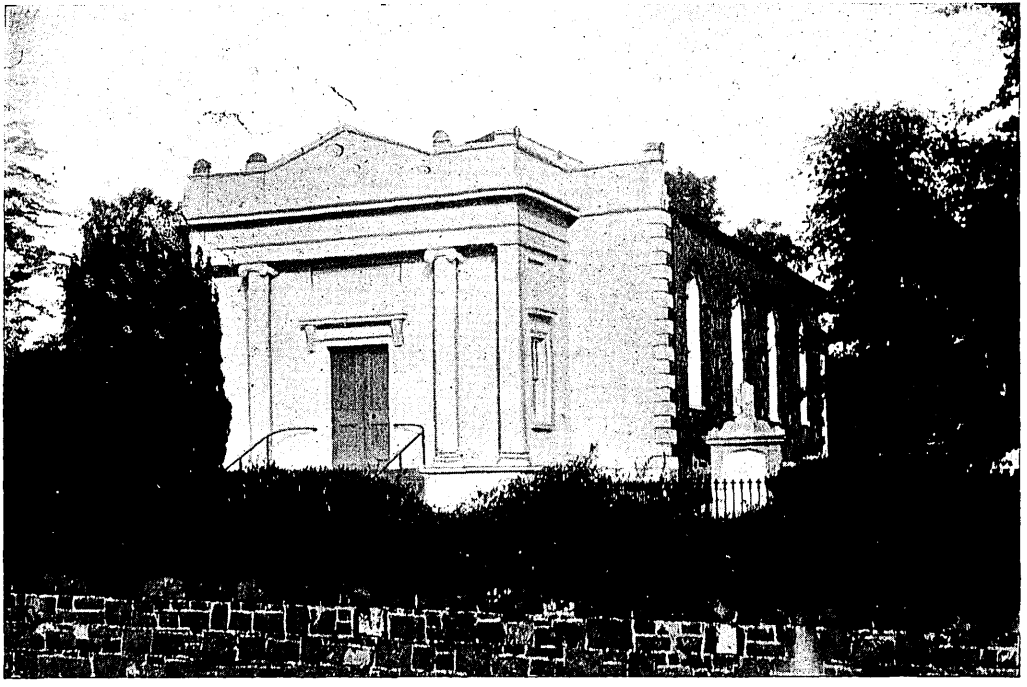
Plague was bad all over Gujarāt, and in Sojitrā some of the new Christians died of it. The words of the ninety-first Psalm became very real to people in those days: "He shall deliver thee . . . from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust." And then, while people were still feeling anxious about this dreaded new disease, came the failure of rain. For in India there are only four months for the rain to fall, and if it fails to come then, nothing will grow. Even if rain were to fall, as an occasional shower sometimes does, during the rest of the year, it would be of no use. So when September came round, "our worst fears,"

says Mr. Henderson, "were realised. The trees which ought now to be a mass of foliage, are nearly all gaunt and bare, their leaves having been stripped off for the poor starving cattle." There was no grain for people to eat and nothing for them to feed their cattle with. What was to be done to help the people to earn money enough to keep them from starvation?

Well, to begin with, there was a certain amount of building work. Masons are not the only people you need to put up a house; you want in India at least two labourers to each mason, even when building is in full swing; but long before that, you want people to fill in holes, dig foundations, make bricks, a kind of work people can learn very quickly, and so on. But most of the Christians in the Borsad district, especially the new ones, and a very great number of people who were not Christians, were weavers by trade. If only they had the money to buy yarn to begin with, and if there were customers to buy the cloth when it was woven, they would be all right. But that was just the difficulty; they had no money, and the people who ordinarily bought their cloth had none either. Well, Mr. Henderson and his neighbour at Anand, Mr. Boyd, put their heads together, at Mr. Boyd's suggestion, and they decided to spend any money they could collect for relief on buying yarn

and giving it out to those who could weave. The little Mission Rest Houses scattered about the country, and even the little country Churches were a sight in those days: they were piled from floor to ceiling with bales of cloth waiting to be sold. The people were paid, of course, when they brought the cloth, and the Mission had to wait to be paid till customers could be found. But advertisements were inserted in the different papers in India, and soon orders for cloth began to come in from places hundreds and hundreds of miles away. There were a hundred and fifty looms going before long, and by the next year these had increased to three hundred.

Early next year orphans began to come in; it was not so much that their fathers and mothers died of hunger just then, but there were many children whose fathers and mothers were dead and who were being brought up by an uncle or cousin, and when the time came that these people found it hard to get food for their own children, they would turn the cousins away and bid them fend now for themselves. But by and by people could not even feed their own children. It was dreadful to see a man bring his little girl of seven or eight, and hand her over to the missionaries to take charge of, never expecting to see her again. Inside and outside Henderson's office there would be people begging for help,



FIRST RANDALSTOWN CHURCH.

here an old man past work, there a widow with several small children.

All this time the Government of course was not idle. As soon as it could be arranged, they started what are called Relief Works at different places, and set the people to dig out tanks or to make roads. But to go to these places meant leaving home, and giving up all hope of saving your cattle, on which so much depends, and often people put off going to the Relief Camp till it was too late. Sometimes they even died on the road trying to get there.

Here is a delightful picture of Henderson among his weavers. "It is weaving day here, and there is very little rest or leisure to be had. I am trying to attend to the business and write my letters at the same time—a thing which I find somewhat difficult to do. As I write, a constant hum of voices is to be heard, which on the whole is not unpleasant. Indeed I have spent many a pleasant hour this year among our weavers, and though I have often had occasion to scold and fine them, I have as often had occasion to praise and reward them." (Any one who knew Henderson might have guessed that: he was always praising and rewarding if he possibly could!) "I have occasionally given prizes to those who do the best work, and nearly every weaving day somebody is deemed worthy of a

prize. This church is indeed "an house of merchandize" at present! It is 30 by 20 feet, and about a third of that space is occupied by cloth. In the porch and inside the church some thirty weavers are seated waiting patiently for their pay, whilst I am seated here in the centre trying to write, with cloth to the left and weavers to the right. Behind the Church there is a room half filled with cloth, so we have now a fine large stock in hand."

But worse still was to come, for, by and by, as generally happens sooner or later in famine time, cholera broke out. It seemed to spread all over the land like lightning. There was, for instance, a great famine camp at Borsad where 30,000 people were gathered together, and every day 200 fresh cases would be struck down with the disease. Others would run off to their villages and carry the germs with them. It spread among the Christians too, and in Borsad scarcely a house escaped.

Henderson had never yet taken his furlough, though he had been out now for ten years, and it had been arranged that he should go home in the August of this year 1900. The senior Missionary of all, the Rev. R. Gillespie, was to take his place when he went, and when he arrived early in the year, they divided the district between them, Mr. Gillespie staying in Borsad and

Mr. Henderson taking charge of the work at Khadānā, Poradā, Sojitrā and Cambay. But one night, early in June, Mr. Gillespie was suddenly struck down with cholera, and in a few hours he was dead. It was a terrible blow to the Mission, for not only was he the Senior among the Missionaries, but his experience, his intimate knowledge of the vernacular and his insight into the mentality of the people were unrivalled.

So now, once more, Henderson had all the burden of this huge work on his shoulders, and of course his furlough had to be again postponed. Those were indeed sad, though heroic, days; in Ahmadabad, Mrs. Steele worked herself actually to death trying to save little babies, and, among the Bheels, Mr. Mulligan and then Mr. Mawhinney laid down their lives for the people they were trying to save.

It is difficult to convey an idea of how terrible the summer of 1900 was. It was the rain having failed the summer before in 1899 that brought the famine; but no one ever believed that this could happen in the following year too; and yet the time for the rain to burst in floods over the land had passed, and there was no sign of a drop. The clouds there were were what the Gujarātis describes as "without roots," like dead leaves drifting about in the sky, not living clouds that

would break out into rain. And all the time there was this awful cholera. It was bad everywhere, but it can hardly have been worse anywhere than in the Borsad district. "During the past fortnight," writes Mr. Henderson, "we have had on an average a death daily among our Christian people. . . . The past three months have been a time of continual weeping, of long drawn out mourning. Scarcely a home has been spared. The cruel cholera has ruthlessly torn away the husband from the wife, the wife from the husband, the father or the mother from the children, or the children from the parents. How I have pitied the fathers left with small children to look after and feed, and there have been many such. . . . This has been a sad, sad time—perhaps the saddest of my life—a time that will never be effaced from my memory."

All this time Henderson had been working hard as Vice-President of the Taluka, that is, County Relief Committee, and had been busy distributing clothing, as well as helping in other ways. When people have nothing to eat, they are not likely to have any money to spare for clothes, and it was dreadful in those days to see respectable men and women going about in scanty rags that really hardly held together and failed to cover their nakedness. Henderson

gave out clothing in this way to fourteen or fifteen thousand people in two hundred villages —think how much time it must have taken!

It all nearly killed him, as it did kill several others, but it made a tremendous difference to the Mission work afterwards. "When I was in Cambay," he says, "a leading Mussulman of the place who came to see me said, in the course of a very interesting conversation I had with him, that what we had done for the good of the suffering and distressed had produced more effect than ten years' preaching. There is no doubt," he goes on, "but that the famine has softened the hearts of the people. The relief work we have been privileged to do has given them a view of the sympathy and love of Christ and of His followers which they had never received before. It has weakened very considerably the bonds of caste, India's greatest bane, it has opened up doors for us that would otherwise have remained closed, it has turned covert enemies into open friends; it has drawn us all, Europeans and natives, closer to one another; and it is our hope that it will draw us all closer to Christ."

CHAPTER IX

Sunrise after Storm

EVEN with all this work on his hands Mr. Henderson found time to plan for the future of his orphan boys. Already several of them were being taught carpentry and tailoring, and he had other trades in his mind for them. And three new farm colonies had been started, one at Khadānā, called after the Rev. J. v. S. Taylor, who was one of the earliest missionaries in the Borsad district; one near Brookhill, called after Mr. Gillespie, who had just died, and one at Poradā. And a large church was rising at Khadānā, for whatever else famine may interfere with, it brings a great chance of building, for there are many things connected with building which ordinary unskilled people can easily be taught to do.

Still, it was a sad, anxious time, and, with hope of rain almost gone, nobody knew what would be likely to happen. Often, going to bed at night, one used to wonder whose death one would hear of next day, and whether there would be

any of us left alive by next year. And then, suddenly, when all hope was gone, and as if in answer to a last great outburst of prayer, down came the rain. "It is simply wonderful," writes Mr. Henderson, "the change that has taken place during the week. The tanks are all now full to overflowing, the frogs are everywhere rejoicing, and the air is charged with hope instead of with anxiety. Nature is now changing her face, and soon she will be clothed with green."

The worst of the anxiety was now over, and Mr. Henderson could begin to look forward with some hope to getting home in the spring. As a matter of fact, the following year was a very bad one again, but nothing ever came quite as bad as the time we had passed through in 1900, and by this time one could at least see one's way to happier things.

One very pleasant event occurred towards the end of that same year, 1900. Dr. Barkley, the co-Convener of the Mission, who had been a judge in the Punjab for many years before he retired and went to live in Belfast, came out to pay us a visit and encourage us; and while he was here, something occurred to which Mr. Henderson had been looking forward for a long time. There had been for about fifty-seven years what was called the Presbytery of Kāthiāwār and Gujarāt, started by the first missionaries in

Rajkot. But, though in recent years some Indian pastors had been invited to be present at its meetings, it was really a committee of the Irish missionaries, and the Indian church had not yet begun to stand on its own legs. But now, by permission and orders of the General Assembly in Ireland, the old Presbytery which had belonged to it was dissolved, and a new one was started which belonged altogether to the Indian church. The missionaries were members exactly equally with the Indians; the clerk was an Indian, and the Moderator an Indian or European, according as the name happened to come on the list. Meanwhile a Mission Council was started to look after the things for which the home church was responsible, and Dr. Barkley was present at the first meetings of both.

Another thing that doubtless gave Dr. Barkley great pleasure, and Mr. Henderson too, was that he was able to be present at the opening and dedication of the new church at Khadānā. It was a beautiful large building, with an apse at one end. Everybody who possibly could was present at the opening service, including no less than fourteen missionaries and all the Indian Christians who could come from Borsad, Brookhill, and all the country round, to the number of 1,500. The opening services were held on the Saturday, and then on Sunday there was a great

baptismal service, at which no less than eighty-seven adults were baptised, besides twenty children. The very next Sunday there was another baptismal service held at Borsad when sixty-eight more people were baptised, and twenty-six infants. It was a happy ending to Mr. Henderson's wonderful years of hard work in this station.

Mr. Henderson stayed on in Borsad till the following March, and then, after paying a visit to the Bheel Mission, and seeing their work, he sailed for home; not before many ceremonies of farewell had been gone through, which Dr. Shillidy, the senior missionary after Mr. Gillespie's death, who now took over charge of Borsad, describes as follows:—

"Last Monday morning a meeting was held in Mr. Henderson's honour at the Nagar Shet's house. (That is the name given to the chief citizen of an Indian town.) Representatives of all classes of the Borsad community were present, and official and non-official native gentlemen vied with each other in reciting his praises for what he had done to help the starving in the famine time, and for his kindliness and amiability of manner towards all during his residence at Borsad. At the close there was the inevitable *pān-sopāri* (betel-nut, which they always give you as good-bye) and garlanding, and he took his departure

amid a shower of roses. From that we had to go to the residence of the Vice-President of the Borsad Municipality, where the same process of garlanding, etc., was repeated, so that by the time Mr. Henderson got started for the Mission House, he was a walking mass of flowers!"

That was only one or two out of a whole series of farewell meetings held in his honour, both by Christians and non-Christians. Indeed it is doubtful if anyone was ever more loved. And what a work he had done in those seven years! The foundation laid for a new station at Cambay; church after church, school houses and whole villages built, several new out-stations opened, and hundreds of people gathered into the church. When he came there were altogether ten schools in the district with 350 scholars; and about 650 people called themselves Christians. When he left, there were thirty-seven schools, with 1,100 scholars, and a Christian community of nearly 2,500, though only half of them had as yet actually been baptised. There was never in the history of our Indian mission such a time of growth as that, and quite certainly there never was anyone who put in such years of hard untiring work. But then there was never anyone quite like Robert Henderson.

CHAPTER X

Back again to Borsad

THAT must have been a happy holiday at home. Henderson had only been home once, for a few months one summer, since he went out to India for the first time eleven years before, and he had almost forgotten what things looked like in Ireland. It was long, too, since he had seen his little girls, and one likes to think of their happiness in being all together. But he spent nearly all the time going about over Ireland trying to rouse interest in the orphans that famine and plague had left in our care, and in the villages he was trying to set going and all the other work he had been doing. It is certain that he enjoyed his time at home very much, but he can hardly have got much rest.

When the time came to go back to India, he thought he would like to pay a visit to Germany on the way out, and see the Mission work which the Irish Presbyterian Church carries on for the Jews in the city of Hamburg. There was a home and workshop there where young men who had been turned out of their homes and deprived of

all chance of earning their living because they had accepted Jesus as the Messiah, were looked after and taught a trade, and helped till such time as they could look after themselves, and Mr. Henderson thought that he might be able to get hints there that would be useful for his own industrial work in India.

"I stayed for two and a half days," he says, "at Hamburg, in the hospitable home of Mr. and Mrs. Frank, and was delighted with everything I saw—with our missionaries, and with the really fine work they are doing. Jerusalem House and the workshop behind it forms a fine property in a good situation. They are the centre of a great deal of missionary activity and enterprise. I was greatly pleased with the workshop. The hand-bags manufactured there are easily made and very cheap, and a great many are turned out every week. Whether we shall be able to introduce the industry into any of our orphanages here remains to be seen. There certainly is no stagnation about our Jewish Mission at Hamburg, . . . and God is blessing them and their work abundantly."

Henderson loved Ireland, and he enjoyed every minute of his time at home with his children and his old friends; but he loved India quite as much, and was very happy to get back to work there.

"I need scarcely say," he writes, "that I am glad to find myself back in Gujarāt again. In many respects there is no country like our dear native land, the 'Emerald Isle,' and when at home on furlough I found it full of charms and charmers; but for me, and a great many others, Gujarāt has attractions which Ireland does not and never can possess. Sunshine, dust, animals of kinds —has not Gujarāt all these in abundance? And its Mission work—surely there is no work so interesting as it at home. . . . I got on board at Naples on November 19th, to find myself surrounded on all sides by missionaries. When I went down into the saloon, I found missionaries to the right of me, missionaries to the left of me, missionaries before me, missionaries behind me. In addition to the Protestant missionaries, there were six R.C. missionaries, two R.C. sisters, and a priest who was going out to Calcutta to act as chaplain to the R.C. troops there. Strange to say, we didn't seem to have a single Jonah on board!!!"

In December, 1902, Mr. Henderson found himself, to his great joy, appointed to his old station of Borsad, Dr. Shillidy, the wise old statesman of the Mission, having gone back to his old station of Surat. He took over charge on the last day of the year, and a few weeks later had the satisfaction of seeing the wish of his

heart granted and a second missionary appointed to oversee the work of this huge district. The new station, now known as Cambay, was given Khadānā and Sojitrā and the Christians round about there to look after, while Borsad kept charge of Brookhill, Poradā, and the place where Mission work in the district had first started, Devān.

It was a very happy year on the whole. The Christians seemed to be getting much keener on the spread of Christ's kingdom. Some of the church members and the older boys in the orphanage formed themselves into a missionary society and carried on work, chiefly on Sundays, in Borsad and most of the surrounding villages; one member started a school for the despised sweepers, which he taught in his spare time; Sunday schools were carried on in many of the near villages; one day a deputation of Christian women came to the missionary to tell him that they had decided to give Rs. 3 a month towards paying the salary of a teacher to work among the sweepers at a village two miles away; and on each Sunday evening a band of Christians used to go off to the town of Borsad and hold a meeting there in the street, which always attracted large audiences.

On the other hand, the ordinary schools went on doing their special work, and Mr. Henderson

felt more and more the need of more teachers, capable and consecrated men, for this work.

The orphans too, were beginning to grow up, and it was becoming a pressing question what to do with them when they should be ready to go out into the world. Mr. Henderson, as we shall see, believed strongly in putting people on the land, and the energies he spent on starting and carrying on his numerous farm colonies would have been astonishing in a man who had nothing else to do. But it would not have been possible to get land for hundreds of young farmers, and not all boys were suited for that kind of life; so the industrial school soon became one of the great features of Borsad. At this time something like forty boys were learning trades: eleven carpentery, eleven weaving, nine tailoring, five shoe-making, and so on. But there were over 300 children in the orphanage, and food and clothes had to be found for these, and teachers paid, and school-books provided, to say nothing of building schemes; and how was all this money to be found? Here the Sunday Schools in Ireland came nobly to the rescue. The 300 orphans at Borsad were, of course, only a small part of the whole, for there were orphanages at this time at almost every station, and they contained altogether over 900 boys and 750 girls. But the different Sunday Schools and Bible Classes

in Ireland began to adopt an orphan, or several orphans, each, and many kind people, sometimes people who had no children of their own, sometimes a family of happy Irish boys and girls, would adopt a little Indian boy or girl, and send £5 a year for its support; and even away off in America people who had heard of the distress in India joined together to send help. There was a weekly paper, the New York *Christian Herald*, whose editor came out for himself to learn the truth about the famine, and among other places he visited Borsad. The result was that the readers of the *Christian Herald* got to be very interested in Borsad, and many of them sent money for Mr. Henderson's large family of children. All this was a great help, but think what work it meant for the missionary! It takes some writing to get one's ordinary home mail done; but if in addition you have 300 children, most of them generously supported by friends at home, who want to hear all about them and how they are getting on, a good many letters have to be written. Many of the children would write letters themselves to their Irish or American parents and brothers and sisters, but these would all, of course, be in Gujarāti, and had to be translated before they were sent, so that it was almost less trouble to write the letter yourself. Here is a description of mail day at Borsad about

this time. Mr. Henderson is writing away—and no one could write more words to the minute than he—at his desk; on the floor Mrs. Henderson is sitting addressing the envelopes and packets, while the syce (the man who looks after the horse) is tying up booklets, and pamphlets, and little Randal sticks on the stamps.

CHAPTER XI

A Master Builder

WHEN Henderson went to College in Belfast, it probably never occurred to him that later in his life he would have to be a builder. Yet there are very few people outside the ranks of professional builders who have put up as many buildings as he. There was the church at Poradā and the great new church at Khadānā; there was the Brown Memorial School-house at Brookhill and the new school-house at Borsad. There was the Borsad Orphanage and other buildings connected with it. And then there were all the villages with the houses he put up for the farmers, and the wells he dug (each of which has to be lined with brick, so that there is as much building to be done in a well as in a tower), and the stables for the cattle, and many other necessary things.

It is not like at home, where, if you want to build a church or a school-house, or even a stable, you send for a builder or contractor, and he gets plans out and works out the probable cost, and arranges for bricks and wood

and masons and labourers, and all you have to do is to see that the work is done as you wish. But it was different in Borsad. First you draw your own plans, or get a friend to do it for you. Then you have to sit down in your study and begin to do endless sums, to see how much the bricks are going to cost, and how much wood will be wanted for the doors and windows and for the roof, and how much it will cost to build so many cubic feet of masonry, and so on. And then you get hold of somebody who understands about making bricks and you get him to set people to work—very likely people that you want to provide work for—and to teach them how to make the bricks. Or, perhaps, even before that, you have to decide what size of bricks you are going to use and get a carpenter to make the sort of moulds you want. Then you have to find out where to get the best lime pebbles, and you bring in so many cartloads of them and build a limekiln and burn your lime for mortar; so very likely the passer-by would see in one corner of the field where you were going to build a smoking brick-kiln, and in another a smoking limekiln. Then you would have to get hold of labourers to dig your foundations and fill them in with broken bricks and mud—you would have made some arrangement to get the water to turn the dry earth into mud and the lime into mortar; and

then you would have to arrange for your carpenters to have their work well in hand, so that the door- and window-frames would be ready by the time the masons got up to the height of the floor in their building. Very likely you would have to go off to some place a long journey away and buy a great beam from which all the wood you wanted could be taken ; and then there would be the tiles to see to—you would have to go to the potter and arrange with him to make so many thousand tiles of such a length and shape ; and all the time there would be the masons and labourers and carpenters to pay, and the village merchant who sells nails and screws.

Of course the missionary would never have time to run round himself to all these people, his Indian helpers do much of that for him, and do it far better than he could. But the missionary has always to be there in the end, when the bargain is made at last, and he has to look after the work carefully and see that it is all properly done, and go over the accounts and pay them and enter them in his books. Altogether, there is nothing that takes up as much time as building does in India, whether it is just repairing a stable or building a new church, and how Henderson ever got through all he did, no one knew. For there was very seldom a year in which he failed to come to the Mission Council with a request to

sanction some building work or other. This time it was the Brookhill church, which had grown far too small for its congregation. As a matter of fact, it was Dr. Shillidy who had got the necessary leave, but it was Henderson who, when he came back from furlough, had to start the building. And he was encouraged, to begin with, to find how keen the people of the village were to help. They subscribed Rs. 200, about £13, and other people helped too, so that only £200 had to be asked for from home. Two transepts were thrown out, and the church was made nearly three times its former size.

A much bigger thing was the plan to enlarge and practically rebuild the Borsad church. It had been put up more than forty years before through the generosity of an Agent of the Governor-General at Baroda, named Col. Wallace. It had cost more than £700 and was very strongly built; but it was really very ugly, just like a barn, with verandahs on two sides, and a room at one end in which tents were stored. It was a large enough church for the little congregation it was built for, but by now the usual congregation was four or five times as numerous, and even at the ordinary Sunday services the crush was so great, that two rows of children had to sit in each aisle, and most of the women out in the porch. So what happened on greater occasions,

when Christians came in from the out-stations, can be imagined.

The question then was how best to enlarge this strongly-built, ugly old church. It could have been taken down, of course, and a new one built in its place; but that would have cost far more, and besides the old church was so splendidly built, it would have been a great pity to knock it down; so everyone said. The only thing to do is just to leave it as it is and build on the necessary addition to match. But Henderson had another plan. He saw no reason why the old building should not be left, but its appearance altered, so that it should look as beautiful as any new church could, and then the new portion be built in keeping with it. So he got a friend to draw out plans. The hideous old square windows were changed into beautiful lancet ones; transepts were added, and last of all a chancel, all in the same style: the old verandah, that made it look just like a bungalow or a school-house, was converted into one with pointed arches, such as you have in old cloisters; finally there was the old square room behind. Everyone said: You can't do anything with that; you'll have to take it down. But Henderson found it was a room with huge thick walls, such as would easily stand the weight of another storey or two on the top, so he turned it into a great square

tower, such as you see in some of the village churches in England. True, in India, roofs have to be rather easy in slope, or the tiles would not stay on, being just laid on, not fastened in any way; and also the church had to be all built of brick, for there is no stone in Gujarāt. All the same, it is really a beautiful church, both inside and out. The chancel window is made of stone, pierced through into patterns. There are similar windows up in the transepts too, which are always there, to preach a sermon, when the real sermon is rather dull. For instance, there is one with the good tree laden with fruit, and the bad tree with the axe already stuck into it, and so on.

All this was done without asking the church at home for a penny! How Mr. Henderson did it, no one knows. Probably no one else could have carried it through. The boys and girls in the orphanage helped a good deal by adding to the letters they wrote in due course every now and then to their supporters in America and other places, some such sentence as this: "We are trying to get money enough to build our new church. The old one became too small because there are so many of us here now"; and the result would quite often be a good subscription for the building fund as well as the money for the support of the children. They also tried in

all kinds of ways, sometimes by earning money, more often by doing without special food, to give something of their very own for their own church; and the older people gave very well too. But some of the boys were able to help in a very special way. Henderson had had his carpenter boys so carefully and well taught, that he was able to get all the windows and doors for the new church from the school workshop.

And then one day he told his young carpenters that he was going to trust them to do something really big. There was a large pointed arch at the West end which was to be filled in with a really fine door, carved all over, like the beautiful doors to be seen in any old Indian town; and he decided to divide it into so many sections and let each boy have one section to do exactly as he liked with. The boys certainly rose to the occasion. Various boys might have been seen sitting on the ground outside their workshop, some with carefully measured and drawn patterns that they had worked out lying in front of them, or pasted on to the bit of wood they had been given as their portion, and others, still better artists, with a bit of a leaf or sprig they had plucked from the hedge, and which they were trying carefully to copy on the wood. By and by these different pieces of carved wood were nailed on to the great door, and they did look beautiful; no two pieces

were the same, everyone had chosen a different pattern, yet they all fitted into each other wonderfully, and it would be hard to find a more beautiful door, unless on one of the great old cathedrals. And of course these carpenter boys and their friends felt more than ever that the church now belonged to them. The church took years to build, and often there was almost no money left in the safe to go on with the work, and yet all the time they never had to go into debt. And when finally it was opened for worship on the 6th of January, 1907, only £100 remained to be got in of all the money it had cost, and that amount was soon raised too.

It was the same with the money for other things, such as the farm colonies. "At least fifty new houses," he writes, "are needed at Borsad, Brookhill, Gillespiepur and Poradā. Where the money for their erection is to come from, I don't know. It may be that God will move some of His servants" to supply it; and this faith was never disappointed; the treasury might be almost empty over and over again, but somehow or other, just when no one knew what to do next, the money would be sent.

Meanwhile all the ordinary work of the station went on as usual, and was constantly being added to. The schools got better and better, and the Sunday Schools of Borsad grew to be quite famous.

CHAPTER XII

Two Under-Shepherds

THE new Brookhill church was opened in 1904, but under a heavy shadow. The Brookhill pastor was not among those present at the dedication of the new church, now enlarged to three times its old size. He had gone to join in the still happier services of the Church in Heaven.

His story is an interesting one.

One day, long, long ago, a missionary, himself a Parsi convert, was going along a road in the city of Surat, and seeing a little boy, asked him to show him the way to the Mission school. But the boy, terrified, swarmed up the nearest tree and was soon hiding among its branches. At first nothing would make him come down, but when the missionary promised him a halfpenny as a reward, he slid down gladly enough. He had no pocket to put the halfpenny in, in fact he had no clothes on at all, but he looked such a bright, intelligent little lad, that the missionary asked him if he wouldn't like to go to school. Now little Rāmā belonged to the outcastes, who are not allowed into school buildings or places where

respectable people can go, and at the thought that he was going to get the chance of learning at school, he got quite excited. The end of it was that he did very well in school, and when he was old enough to think of earning his own living, he became teacher and even headmaster of that very school; afterwards the missionary put him into the Mission Press and let him learn to be a compositor. Rāmbhāi, as he was called when he was grown up, had only learnt Gujarāti, yet before long he was able to set up books in Hindi, Sanscrit, Urdu, Arabic, Persian and even, perhaps, Hebrew, as well as in English. He used to say that he got to know the look of the different words so well, that in a language of which he couldn't understand a word he could often detect mistakes and correct them. All the years he was at the Press, Rāmbhāi was busy in his spare time doing anything he could, preaching in the streets, or teaching a Sunday School class, or whatever it was, to help forward the great Kingdom into which he had been brought, and after a while it was thought that even such a clever compositor would be doing better service if his whole time were spent as a Mission worker. He studied all this time, too—there was no Stevenson College in those days, but young men studied at home and were given examinations to pass—and in due course he was licensed to preach the Gospel, and

when the people of Brookhill wanted a pastor of their own, Rāmbhāi was the one they chose. He was our first Indian pastor, and the name of the Rev. Rāmbhāi Kalyan is still remembered with reverence and affection. He was once taken to Ireland and preached by interpretation in several of our churches there. How good he was, and how wise, and always careful not to hurt anyone's feelings. And what an orator he was! Like some other orators, he needed an audience, and he never could start speaking to a small group of people that was gradually melting away; but if the people were once gathered to listen he would soon warm to his work and speak as few could in Gujartāi, till his audience would be carried away by his eloquence. And all the time he was so kind and gentle, so full of fun and of stories, and so appreciative of little kindnesses. He was a real friend.

Mr. Henderson must have missed Rāmbhāi terribly at this time, though he was an old man of sixty-six when he died, and it must have been lonely work finishing the church without him.

The enlarged church was opened for worship in November, and by that time there seemed little doubt as to who Rāmbhāi's successor was to be. Many years before, a young man, who, as a boy, had had a great desire to escape from death, and even formed a boyish society for that

purpose, fell in with a copy of St. John's Gospel, and finding there the answer to his question, decided to learn more about Christ, and in the end was baptised, though by this he cut himself off from all who loved him.* His name was Kahānji Mādhavji, and by and by he was allowed to enter Stevenson College among the first students, and study there for the ministry. He passed all his examinations well and some years later was licensed to preach; so, as Mr. Henderson had him working under him at Borsad, when old Rāmbhāi died, he sent him to Brookhill to look after things there for a bit, and so well did he do his work, and so fond did the people get of him, that when the time came to choose a minister, everybody agreed on Kahānji. He was ordained on the 18th of May, 1905, in Brookhill, and in Brookhill he spent the rest of his life. He was a man of exceptional charm and great ability. For some years he was Clerk of Presbytery, and one year was Moderator of the Synod of Gujarāt and Rajputana. But it is as a Christian poet that he will best be remembered. Next to the Rev. J. v. S. Taylor, Gujarāti Hymnology owes most to him, and his renderings of ancient Latin and other hymns are particularly successful. He was one of the pioneers of what is now called "musical evangelism," having written a beautiful

* For the full story see *Sheila's Missionary Adventures*, p. 131.

Life of Christ in verse, and it was a treat to hear him singing from this song-cycle, accompanying himself on his Indian violin. He died when still quite young in the first year of the war, and his death was an irreparable loss to the church, and in particular to Henderson, to whom he had been like a younger brother. Indeed, we all felt that we could have spared any of ourselves sooner than him.

CHAPTER XIII

After-Care

MEANWHILE Henderson never ceased trying to think out new ways of getting the work improved all over his district. For instance, he started a training class for schoolmasters, which was conducted by his own best teacher, a man who had been through a Training College; and for a month or so during the summer holidays village teachers could come in and learn how to do their work better. This was long before the Mission had a Training College of its own, for men at least.

The Industrial School gave him a good deal of anxiety at this time, for a number of boys were growing up and ready to pass out into the world, and he wasn't sure what was the best thing to do with them.

"Some fifty are learning trades—carpentry, tailoring, weaving, dyeing, shoemaking, garden-farming, tinsmithing. Some of them are making very good progress, and a number of them are now practically self-supporting. The more experience I have, however, the more am I convinced that until we get a practical man, our industrial work will never be placed on a proper basis.

"To teach a Christian boy a trade is comparatively easy, but to find remunerative employment for him in this country, once he has his trade learnt, is very difficult. A number of boys will always get employment inside the Christian community, but what of the others? Are we to send them to workshops and factories, where they will perhaps be out of the reach of Christian influences, or are we to carry on workshops and give them employment ourselves! These and questions like these rise up and meet us, and we have to face them, whether we wish to do so or not. When we do wrestle with them, one is often driven to the conclusion that after all the best solution of the problem is to be found in the land. Settle a boy in one of our farm colonies, give him 'three acres and' a bullock (not 'a cow'), and he will be able, if he is at all industrious, to provide honestly for himself and for his own house, and to live at the same time in a Christian atmosphere."

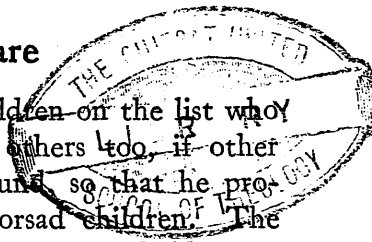
As a matter of fact, these boys had learnt their trades very well. One of us tramped all over Switzerland and Tyrol in a pair of Borsad-made boots, which lasted for many years. People were thankful to get Borsad-trained tailors at other stations, where they did very well, and the Borsad church bears witness enough to the carpenters. So the school was certainly from that point of view a success already.

Still it made a great difference when at length it became possible to secure a properly qualified instructor, a Muhammadan called Mr. Suleman. Some Hindu boys even began to come to the school from the town, which was wonderful, for up to that time people of good caste only wanted their boys taught to use their brains, not their hands, while some of the older boys had by now passed out to earn their own living, sometimes as teachers in other schools of the kind.

Under its trained headmaster the Industrial School continued to flourish. In one year we read that there were seventy-five pupils in it, of whom twenty-five were learning carpentry, twenty-four tailoring, five smithing, eight weaving, eight farming, and five drawing only. Borsad had by this time been made a centre of examinations in drawing, and the school did very well in that. Indeed, one of the pupils, a Parantij orphan, did so well that he became drawing master in the school, and several of the other pupils also rose to be masters. So well was the school doing that new buildings had to be put up, and Government was glad to pay a large sum towards their cost. Yet Henderson was nothing if not honest, and when a thing did not succeed, he was always ready to say so. "Hand-loom weaving," hesays,-writing some years later, "ought still to be one of the best trades for a boy to learn, but it has

not proved a success in our school. Most of the boys who have passed through the weaving department are earning their living now by means of weaving, but in some other way. The loom we use—the English fly-shuttle loom—is simple enough in construction, and it does more work than the country loom, but it is not popular. . . . It is too costly, it takes up too much room, it needs good twist yarn for the warp, etc. From the practical standpoint, therefore, our Weaving Department has been largely a failure, and for that reason we may soon have to close it."

There was another difficulty about the orphans that cropped up now, but a very happy solution of it was found. When Dr. Klopsch and the New York *Christian Herald* originally adopted famine orphans—and they undertook the support of 5,000 to begin with, and a great many more afterwards in different parts of India—it was only for five years, and the five years were nearly up. Some of the girls were married, some of the boys were earning their own living, but there were many of the children left who had come to the orphanage very young, perhaps as babies, and had still to be looked after by somebody, and what was to be done if these good American friends suddenly let them drop? However, Dr. Klopsch, when he heard of the difficulty, promised to support for



at least another year all children on the list who were under fourteen, and others too, if other supporters could not be found, so that he provided that year for 182 Borsad children. The offer was renewed more than once, and *Christian Herald* gifts continued to come till 1907, and even after that some of the American adopters of Borsad boys and girls went on helping, till their charges were old enough to look after themselves. Henderson found a happy way of showing his gratitude to this good newspaper man—he called a new farm colony after him—Klopschpur.

The other work of the station went steadily forward; every day in towns and villages people were being told of God's love, and children were being taught in schools, of which there were now at least twenty in the villages, although a good many had been handed over, of course, to the new Mission station at Cambay, when it was started some years before, and every now and then a new one would be started.

Starting a school is not always easy work. Most of these schools were for the outcaste children, but one or two were meant for any caste who would come, and a new one of this kind was opened at a village called Naman, and seemed likely to be a great success. But one day, when Henderson visited it, somebody made the people believe that these Christians were plotting

to get all the children of the village polluted and turn them straight off into Christians; and as a result the children rushed from school and made straight for the village tank, in whose dirty water they washed away the defilement which the Sahib's visit had caused. None of them ever came near the school again.

Sometimes Henderson felt a little disappointed that things were not moving more quickly among the low castes, with all the schools there were for them, and all the preaching in their villages, and the influence of those who had become Christians. But one reason seemed to be that other Missions had come in and were working close by, who made too little difference between Christians and heathen, so that it was easy enough to become a Christian of a sort, and that made it harder for the stricter Mission to carry out its rules. If you allow people, for instance, to take part in idol feasts and yet to continue calling themselves Christians, the ordinary man will think he need not make himself uncomfortably peculiar by becoming a strict Christian. But, once you find out, as these other Missions gradually did, that you weaken the church by allowing things like that to go on, it is very hard indeed to make a change.

A gentleman who had lost his way once got hold of a kindly man to put him on the right track.

" What are you ? " he asked by and by.

" I'm a Christian."

" Well, I hope you are one of the right sort."

" I'm afraid I'm not a Sunday Christian," was the reply, meaning one who knocked off work on Sunday, a discipline our Mission insists on.

But though there were no longer a great many people crowding into the church, the Christians in the Borsad district in many ways gave great encouragement. Year by year their liberality increased. It was quite a common thing for the children in the orphanages to go without things like butter or sugar for weeks at a time, in order to have something to put into the Bible Society's annual collection. In fact, this had to be discouraged at last, lest they should injure their health by it.

Mrs. Henderson all this time carried on a large and extensive Irish crochet industry to help the women, and orders used to come from all parts of the world. One woman supported herself and her family for the greater part of the year in this way, and all the women used to give a large part of what they earned, usually a sixteenth, to " the Lord's Work," as they called it. On such loving terms was she with her workers, that when she was home on furlough, they would make a long detour rather than pass the bungalow that seemed so forlorn without her.

CHAPTER XIV

Farm Colonies

"THE best solution of our problem is to be found in the land." This was the considered judgment of Henderson, who, from being a critic of the policy of farm colonies, became its most ardent apostle.

When first those missionaries came from Surat, to follow up the men who had come with tracts in their hands to visit them, they found people, mostly of high caste, in many villages on the banks of the Mahi and northward ready to receive the gospel. But when any of these people summoned up courage to ask for baptism, terrible persecution arose. There were even murders, and a common way of dealing with a man who decided to become a Christian was to say: "Let him go if he likes, but we will keep his wife and children. So the missionaries were forced to think of some way of finding shelter for all these new Christians who had been turned out of their homes, and to provide them with some way of earning their living. It happened, that there was a little land for sale near Borsad, where that

first celebration of the Lord's Supper had taken place, and the missionaries bought this land, built half a dozen little houses on it and gave the rest to these new Christians to cultivate. This piece of land had always been known as Kāshi Wādi, the beautiful garden, and the village, which now has many houses, and school, church, hospital, dispensary, orphanages and workshops, is called Kāshi Wādi still.

After a while Kāshi Wādi got to be crowded, so a colony was taken from there to found a village known now as Rānipur (Queen's Village), near Ahmadabad. The missionaries had merely helped their converts to get this land and to build houses on it, and they paid their rent direct to Government; but when they badly wanted money, there was nothing to prevent them selling the land to anybody. The result was that in a short time a great deal of the land that had been got with such high hopes had passed back into the hands of Hindus. So a new plan was thought of, a plan that has been kept to ever since.*

In this part of India the Government really owns all the land, and the farmer pays his rent to Government; but as long as he pays his rent, the land is practically his own, and he can sell

* For this whole question of Farm Colonies see Mr. Henderson's own brochure: *Christian Farm Colonies* (Surat, 1911).

it, that is, the right to cultivate it, to anyone who wants to buy, so that besides the rent, you have to find a large sum of money to pay the man who owned the land before you, and this poor Christians could not easily do; but the new plan was for the missionary to buy the land, and then charge the farmers a rather higher rent than the Government one, so that by degrees the money paid down for the land would come back, and a village fund would grow up, which could be spent on building houses, digging wells, or buying more land for the village. Ordinary Mission money was never spent in this way, that all went to spreading the Gospel among the people, by preaching or schools or in other ways: all the money for these farm colonies had to be privately collected by the missionaries from their friends, or from anyone whom they were able to interest in the scheme.

These farm colonies were also a great blessing to the people who became Christians from among the outcastes. They had not persecution to fear, so much as the bad influence of the heathen life round them. A Hindu or Muhammadan village is not a clean place in any sense, and it is as difficult to keep one's mind and soul clean there as one's body. It is bad enough for the converts, but far worse for their children. But these little colonies were, as the name suggests, little

settlements of Christ's people among the heathen, little bits of a Christian country, that anyone could go and see, where children could grow up as Christian children ought to do, and where the law of Christ was the law of the place, even if every one did not always remember to keep it.

Then there were the orphans, for whom these colonies were a great blessing, for when they grew up and were ready to earn their own living, there was the Christian colony always ready to stretch out its arms and welcome another colonist.

Most of these colonies were able to stand on their own legs after a few years, that is, the money first spent on them gradually came back, as the people paid their rent, and so there was a steady fund for the improvement of the villages.

Of course there have to be rules, but these are very few; only they have to be kept very strictly. One is, that each farmer must be able to support himself and his family. If he finds he cannot, the missionary will try and get him some other kind of work, but he must give up his farm if he is too lazy, or too bad a farmer, to make it pay.

Another is that he must pay his rent. If he fails to do this, he must look for other work; these colonies would have a very short life, if the farmers were not kept punctual about paying their rent.

The third rule and the most important of all is that each inhabitant of the colony must keep the rules of the Christian Church. In each colony there is a committee, generally of five, chosen by the farmers themselves, and called a Punch, the word in most Indian languages for *Five*. (The beverage Punch is so called because it is made of five different ingredients.) If any of the farmers or the people living in the village is accused of doing something that would be wrong for a Christian to do, he has to come before this committee, the Punch, and the whole thing is gone into very carefully, and if he deserves it, he is punished, very likely by a fine, and if it were proved that he had been acting so for long and was a bad influence in the village, he might be turned out altogether. As a result of this, not only is it made easier for people in these little Christian villages to live as Christians should, but that sort of way of living becomes the natural thing for all Christians, and those who live among the heathen also try to keep to this standard, so that these villages help the whole tone of the church.

Henderson found this system in full swing when he came to Borsad, but he planted a number of new farm colonies, as generous friends supplied him with funds. One, for instance, founded near a place called Dehemi, was given the name

of Sandspur, from a generous Mr. Sands, of Newry, who gave £500 to start it. Another colony, as we have seen, started near Borsad, was given the name of Klopschpur, after the great-hearted American journalist, who had recently died.

It may be of interest to enquire how a colony of this kind was set going. Well, first, of course, you had to get the land, if possible waste land, that you could get for very little from Government, but there was hardly any of this left by now, so you had to spend a good deal of money in buying land from farmers who were prepared to sell.

Then you would choose your first settlers, and they would build huts for themselves, until you could raise the money to build them proper brick houses. Here is Mr. Henderson's description of one of these settlements at the start, Gillespiepur, near Brookhill.

" It is not what you would call a very imposing city, as it can only boast of fourteen residences, none of which can be described as palatial. Each residence consists of a single room about 16 feet by 15 feet. The walls are made, not of stone, or brick, or even of mud, but of the stalks or branches of cotton plants, and the roofs, which are by no means watertight, rest on brick pillars. The doors are of the same material as

the walls, and any fairly tall person who wishes to enter them has to humble himself, as, without stooping, he could not in most cases get inside the houses, unless he was prepared to lose the top of his head, or at least the crown of his topi.

"The streets are neither very extensive nor very well lighted, and the only square is occupied, not by any famous man's statue, but by real live objects—the cattle of the place. There are two rows of huts, seven in each, with a space fifty feet wide between, which is enclosed for the cattle."

Here is a story about the people who lived in the particular village that has just been described. "When the first heavy burst of rain came (at the beginning of the monsoon), the pillars of one of the end houses came down, and of course the roof with them. It was early on Sunday morning, when the catastrophe occurred, and the people scarcely knew what to do. They thought it might be a breach of the Sabbath to raise the roof and put supports under it, though it was raining heavily, and the fallen roof, if left as it was, was likely to pull down the pillars of the neighbouring house! So off they went to Brookhill to attend the morning service and consult their pastor, the Rev. Kahanji Madhavji. He soon settled the matter for them, for he went

back with them and helped them to repair temporarily the damage done."

"It is needless for me to say," says Mr. Henderson, "that I am a great believer in our Christian farm settlements and in the work they are accomplishing. The longer I live in the country, the stronger and more confirmed my belief in them becomes. When I took charge of the Borsad station over thirteen years ago, I was certainly no farm colony enthusiast. Some time after I came here we had a debate at one of our monthly meetings for workers, as to whether people, when they became Christians, ought to be removed to Christian settlements or allowed to live in their villages. I had great difficulty in getting anybody to support the side that the people ought to be allowed to remain in their own villages, but after some persuasion, the Rev. Rāmbhāi Kalyan, the then pastor of Brookhill, stepped into the breach, and his speech on the occasion was one of the finest ever I heard him make—and that is saying a great deal. I supported his side, and one or two others did, but when the vote was called for, only three or four individuals voted on Rāmbhāi's side—himself and his seconder and one or two allies. All the others present—man, woman and child—voted on the other side. Had I not been chairman, I would have voted

then for Rāmbhāi, but I would vote on the other side now!

"Since I returned from furlough, four-and-a-half years ago, I have spent something like £1,300 in connection with our farm settlements. . . . That is a large sum, and I am strongly of opinion that it has been well spent, even if the expenditure be viewed and weighed from the purely spiritual standpoint."

But of course these farm colonies gave him a great deal of anxiety as to how the expense of them was to be met. At one time the debt on them, after he had got subscriptions of between Rs. 8,000 and 9,000, was still as much as Rs. 7,000, but he was not the least downhearted or discouraged, because he always believed the money needed would be sent somehow. And so in a year or two we find him writing: "In February last our Farm Colonies were free from debt." But then he goes on: "I was offered a valuable property, consisting of almost 60 acres of good land, a large house and two irrigation wells, near Klopschpur, for about £800, and though I had practically no money in hand to pay for the property, I made the venture and secured it for the colony. Since then friends have been cheering me by their gifts, and I now feel that the great Provider of all will somehow provide the money we now so badly need. Since the property

was acquired, twelve houses have been erected at the place, and other work done, and the debt has been reduced to less than Rs. 8,500."

A favourite plan of his to get support and help for his colonies was to offer people shares in them "with unlimited interest" in the form of good done. He used to tell people that they could have their own share in one of these farm colonies by paying down £50 for a farm, farm house and cattle shed. To those who could not afford so much he offered a farm for £30, or a farm-house for £15, or a cattle shed for £5. A good well could be sunk for £80, and a whole new colony started for £500.

Let not his old friends forget that these colonies of his, which are his characteristic memorial, still need new shareholders.

CHAPTER XV

Lights and Shadows

ONE of the things Henderson was specially interested in was the English School. It was doing splendidly. There were 120 pupils now, fifty of them (including two girls !) Christians, but the greater part were non-Christians from the town. It was necessary to begin to think of building a proper school-house for it, and it earned a good grant from Government. And then there came a great blow to the work.

Seventeen years earlier, after several attempts had been made by the people of Borsad to start an English School, they sent a deputation to Mr. Boyd, Henderson's predecessor, asking him to open an English School. He did this, and both he and Henderson spent a great deal of time and trouble and hard work as well as money guiding the school through its earlier years. Plague and famine came to hinder it, but now at last it was in a really flourishing state and able to stand, more or less, on its own legs.

Just at that time, however, there was a great agitation, begun in Bengal and spreading from

there, against everything foreign, and though this school had only Indians on its staff, still, as a Mission School, and one that taught the Christian religion (which these people looked on as a foreign one, though after all it belongs as much to India as to England or Ireland or America), a plot was formed to destroy it. Not that the people of Borsad were in the plot, except a few discontented lawyers, who had little to do and were therefore glad to be given some mischief for their idle hands.

But a great man came down from Ahmadabad on Easter Sunday, 1908, and a meeting of the townsfolk was called to hear what he had to say. He roused all their enthusiasm, as he spoke of their Motherland, and how they ought to love her and defend her, and then scathingly rebuked them, as educated people, who ought to be setting a good example, for sending their boys to a foreign school, where they were taught a foreign religion. Surely they loved their country and their religion well enough to have a school of their own! It would only cost a few thousand rupees to start. Now was the opportunity to see which were the loyal and patriotic inhabitants of Borsad. And there and then the hat was passed round, and several good subscriptions were got from those who hated the Mission and its school. Of course after that nobody dared

refuse! If anyone did, he would be set down as half a Christian and one who cared nothing about his own country; and the poor man would hardly know where to turn. Probably, if the subscriptions had not been collected on the spot they would not have got much; people would have said that they would think about it and the whole thing would have fizzled out. But as it was, they collected promises of Rs. 7,000 at the meeting, and before long they had Rs. 12,000, and two months later their school was opened. Just before the hot weather holidays nearly all the Hindu boys in the Mission School left in a body, after one of their number had addressed them, saying they could not be true to their own religion if they remained any longer as pupils of the Mission School. Only the Muhammadan boys and one or two others who were the sons of Hindu Government officials remained faithful to the school. "We think it is not unfair to say," wrote Mr. Henderson, "that the people of Borsad have shown a good deal of ingratitude and requited us somewhat badly in opening an opposition school just when our school had reached a flourishing condition." That was all he ever said about it, and what he did was even more wonderful. Finding that the new school had come to stay, he did his best to help to make it as good a school



A GROUP OF IRISH PRESBYTERIAN MISSIONARIES IN GUJARAT.

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as possible. He used to visit it and examine it and even joined the committee of it and helped it in every way he could.

That was surely a bigger thing than taking a city!

Meanwhile the church was gradually being built up, and one happy day in March, 1909, a pastor (Rev Jethā Bābhāi) and three elders for the Borsad congregation were ordained in the Kāshi Wādi Church. Poradā got its pastor some years later in 1914, and so by degrees the church in the district was learning to stand by itself. By 1909 there were over 1,000 baptised Christians in connection with the station, which does not take into account, of course, those now belonging to the station of Cambay, which had been carved out of the Borsad district some years before. Each village too had its Punch, or Committee, and the result was that "our Christian people scarcely ever take each other into a court of law, as disagreements among them are nearly always settled by the church court."

New converts still kept coming in, though not in large numbers as at first. "My experience," says Henderson, "is that of those among the Dheds who join us and become connected with the Christian church, a remnant, sometimes a fairly large one, often a very small one, always remains. It is by means of these remnants

that Christ's Kingdom is being gradually extended among the despised and the outcaste."

The Sunday Schools continued to do well. The India Sunday School Union, had started a system of examinations for the whole of India, the same questions being asked on the same day all over India in many different languages, and the first time the Borsad Sunday School entered for the examination, they got in one Division fifteen out of the twenty-four First-class Certificates that were earned all over Gujarāt by the Sunday Schools of four or five different Missions, and seventeen out of thirty-one in another Division, and the first and second place in both Divisions, while a Borsad teacher got first place in the Teachers' Division. Another year, out of 120 who entered for the examination from Borsad, only six failed to pass; another time out of all who went in, only one failed. Another year Borsad got first place (which meant a medal) in each Division, Senior, Middle and Junior, for which it sent in candidates. In fact no one seriously hoped to beat Borsad in those days!

Then there was a flourishing Christian Endeavour Society that seemed to succeed in Borsad, when the rest of us could make little or nothing of it. The meetings were held after the midday Sunday School and were well attended,

from fifty to one hundred being present. The missionary was the President, but he attended only when reports of committees, etc., were given in. The boys conducted all the ordinary meetings and transacted all the business themselves. "A band of boys usually goes on Sunday evenings to one of the neighbouring villages or into Borsad with an experienced worker to publish the glad tidings. The boys all help to attract the people by singing lustily, and one or two of them afterwards tell in their own way the old old story of Jesus and His Love."

"Christian Endeavour Societies have been started at Borsad, Brookhill, Poradā and Sandspur, and are doing good work. In connection with the Sandspur Society, a young farmer, an ex-orphan boy, has started a class for those who cannot read at the place, and has already taught one or two young men to read."

Henderson's interest in Christian Endeavour work extended far beyond the bounds of the societies he was himself connected with. He was for some years a member of the C.E. Executive Council for India and in that capacity attended its Convention at Rangoon, when he was appointed to represent the India C.E. Union at the British and Irish C.E. Convention during his furlough.

CHAPTER XVI

Good-bye to Borsad

At last in 1914, the time came for Henderson to leave Borsad. His furlough was due, and someone else would have to be sent there in any case to take his place while he was at home. But he had spent twenty years there, and the work, and especially the responsibility for raising all that money, had been growing too heavy for him, and he was now over fifty; so, much as he loved Borsad, indeed it was his real home in India, he felt that his work there was done.

During the twenty years he was at Borsad, the Christian community had doubled, and their giving to God's work had grown to four times as much, and that in spite of the fact that a large proportion of the Christian community of those earlier days had been given over to the new station of Cambay. There were now three regularly organised congregations in the Borsad station, with their own ministers and elders (though the minister of the third one was not actually ordained there till just after Henderson had left).

Then they had very nearly managed to reach their aim of having a Sunday School wherever there was a Mission Day School, so that there were now twenty-seven Sunday Schools with fifty-four teachers and 1,055 scholars, of whom 400 were not even Christians at all.

There were now altogether thirty schools, most of them for the children of the "Untouchables," some for the very lowest even among these. These schools were all the time "helping to raise the downtrodden and the outcaste intellectually and spiritually," and many of the converts in the district were the fruit of these schools.

Then there was the Industrial School—how it had grown,—and the Christian Endeavour Society and the regular preaching of the Gospel from seven centres, so that Mr. Henderson could say :—"People of all castes and classes in this district now know something about Christ, and a leavening process is going on which is perceptibly influencing the thoughts and ideas of the people."

And lastly there were the farm colonies, no less than four of which Henderson had started himself, besides all the work he had done in improving and enlarging those he found when he went there first. And there were the churches he had built or rebuilt at Khadānā (now handed over to Cambay) at Poradā, at Brookhill and at

Borsad, to say nothing of all his other building work. To make a complete list of his buildings is impossible, but he must have built at least (or in some cases rebuilt) :—Four churches, three school-houses, four manses or houses for workers (but there must have been far more), two or three Orphanage buildings, between 140 and 150 houses, nearly 120 stables, a number of wells, a couple of extensive compound walls. And sometimes there would be so much building work going on at one time that the preparation of materials would have to be on a huge scale. One year he made as many as a million bricks. And this, with all his ordinary work to do, preaching, taking services, holding classes, looking after schools and after all the congregation scattered over these different little villages and hamlets ; and all the work of the Mission outside his own station, as examiner, and member of innumerable committees, and for a long time Clerk of Presbytery ; and ready at any moment to do a hand's turn for anyone who asked him, for he "had always time to be kind." And he was also a member of the Municipality, and frequently Chairman of its School Board. Indeed, how he ever got through his day, or how he ever managed to get through even a quarter of the work he did, it is difficult to imagine.

Now perhaps you might think that a man who did such a quantity of work and accomplished so much must have been a stern sort of person, always thinking of the call of duty and going about with a frown of concentration on his face. But Henderson wasn't the least like that.

When you went to stay with him, you always felt as if you were on holiday, because there was a continual holiday feeling about him. He would take you out in the morning to show you the Industrial School, or something he was building, and you would think he was just showing you things, whereas really all the time he would be noticing for himself anything that needed to be attended to, and he would point it out to the man in charge in such a pleasant way, that instead of feeling as if he had been scolded, he would feel encouraged. Henderson believed very much in praise, and he got far more out of people by praising them than most people do by finding fault. But he never let bad, careless work pass ; he could detect it at once, and though he said very little, it was always enough to make the person determine never to get caught out again. But everybody you passed when you were with him always had a smile, I think very likely without knowing it, just because he smiled at them and they couldn't help smiling back.

The fact was that he had never really grown up. He was just a boy, and a boy he remained all his life. I remember once being with him at an out-station, and we had gone to rest in a little upstairs room. There was a school going on down below, and you could see down into it through the boards of the floor. Suddenly Henderson was seized with an idea, and filling a small can with water he poured it through the cracks on the heads of the children below. "Rejoice, children!" he said, "the monsoon has come!" Once, when I was staying there, we were sitting on the verandah after dinner, when with a roar the most awful beasts rushed at us and began to attack us with their horns. They really did look dreadful in the moonlight, and we all screamed, and they roared, and danced about, till at last they fell to pieces and each showed it was composed of two orphan boys, with various cloths and rags cleverly made into horns and tails and so on. Of course it was only Henderson Saheb who would encourage the like of that! He loved tying a string of fireworks secretly along a verandah, and then setting them off when no one was expecting anything.

Mr. Archibald, the Children's Missioner, often recalls with delight his first introduction to Henderson. He had come over from Anand to take services for the children in Borsad, and the

arrangement was that Mr. Boyd was to take him riding half-way, about six miles, when Henderson would meet them at a certain tree, which marked the half-way spot, and take him on to Borsad. However, when they got to the half-way tree, there was no sign of Henderson, and they were just wondering what to do, when they heard a yell behind them, and a highwayman jumped out on them. It was only Henderson's way of letting off his high spirits.

And it was just the same wherever you were : at Inter-Mission Conferences or committee meetings everyone wanted to be near Henderson, because they knew he could always cheer them up, and wherever he sat was the centre of the table. I suppose he sometimes felt depressed and unhappy like other people, but he never showed it and always seemed full of fun; at any rate he managed to make everyone around him happy. When you went to Borsad in those days, there seemed a different atmosphere about the place from anywhere else, and the secret of it was in the Mission House, where every unkind word was taboo; their house, whether in India or in Ireland, was a place where love dwelt, and many of us, when we read that poem of love in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, are somehow reminded of staying in the Mission House at Borsad.

So it is not surprising that, when it was known that these two were leaving Borsad and not likely to come back to live there again, a great meeting was held in the town, to which all sorts of people, Hindu and Muhammadan, came; and Mr. Henderson was presented with an illuminated address in a silver casket; and the feeling behind it all was so manifest, that, if he had never known before, he must have found out then how entirely he had the love of the people among whom he had lived for so long. Some years later, when the Mission Council happened to be meeting at Borsad, a great public meeting was once more held in the town, and a portrait of him that had been subscribed for was unveiled, and may still be seen hanging in the Municipal Board Room.

CHAPTER XVII

On Furlough

It is one of the compensations of living in India that you can choose several delightful alternative routes to go home and come back by. This time, the Hendersons who had their youngest child, Helen, with them, took steamer to Venice, and after some pleasant weeks in Italy, went on to Switzerland, where their eldest daughter, May, was then living, and stayed there two months. It was while they were there that they got the sad news of the death of Mrs. Henderson's brother, Dr. Chestnut, in Tralee, so that it was a sad homecoming.

The summer of this furlough was spent at Portrush, and they moved to Belfast for the winter.

Their second daughter, Norah, has written down what she remembers of her father on this and other furloughs, and it gives an excellent idea of what he was like with his children.

"My earliest recollection of my father is of a delightful playfellow, who would get down on hands and knees and let me mount astride

his back, and then would career around the room with shouts of 'Hokeyoh' and 'Boys-a-dear!' Every Saturday he would take his little bag and go off to preach on the next day, for it was rare indeed for him to be at home upon a Sunday. He went, he told us, to tell everybody about the little Indian boys and girls. We used to think there must be such a lot to tell about them, because he went away so often, and he carried so many little books and pamphlets with him to sell to the people, and he never seemed to bring any back unsold. I remember once in Belfast seeing people literally crowd to the vestry after the service to buy these little books which would tell them more of what they had heard in the church."

"When the short months of furlough ended, and we were all left at home, there would come week by week, long, newsy letters from his pen, and in this way we were able to keep in touch with the father whom we really knew so little. They were not short scrappy notes, but brimful of all kinds of news that would interest us. How he ever made time to write them is more than I can understand. Sometimes he would write in a train while travelling from place to place, sometimes while the post was waiting; but they always came. He had an extraordinary gift for easy letter writing, and once I remember

with what joy we got a letter from him all in doggerel rhyme from beginning to end. When we went to school, he took the keenest interest in all we did; in our examinations and in our games. He always advised us to try everything, not to be onesided in work or play. If a thing was worth doing, it was worth doing well; if we aimed at the sky, we might hit the top of the tree!

"As we grew older, we began to see more clearly that there was something behind all his gay fun and cheery optimism. We began to have glimpses of his earnest spirit, but only glimpses, as India is very far away, and furloughs do not often come.

"In the summer of 1914 we spent two happy months in Portrush. Here in the month of September there were baskets of blackberries to be picked, a favourite occupation of my father's. It was he who always found the first few blackberries of the season, and it was he who knew later where the blackberries grew thickest. We would leave our bicycles in a lane and follow him through hedges, struggling through holes, leaping over streams—no place would be too difficult to reach when he led us. You would think for the moment that he had no other care in the world but that of blackberry picking. There is a steep hill just outside

Portrush, and I can remember him calling to us on our bicycles: 'Come on, make a dash for it—that's the way to get up every hill. Don't stand and look at it; make a rush, and the hill disappears.' And so it often happened, that we reached the top of the hill almost before we knew!

"He had certain favourite stories that he loved to tell with the greatest relish. One was about our headmistress at school. She had complained a few times that I was not always as quiet as I might be during school hours. Instead of writing a contrite letter for the sins of his daughter, he wrote saying he was sorry, but *he* was not responsible, for he was the quietest man alive, but that his daughter must have inherited all her noise from her mother. This idea amused the lady so much, that her anger was completely turned away."

CHAPTER XVIII

Double Duty

MR. HENDERSON was entitled to twenty months' furlough, but in less than a year he was back in India. This time he was thrust at once into double work, being stationed in Surat, but with the duty of supervising the work at his old station of Broach, which he had left twenty-one years before to go to Borsad. No one, not even a Henderson, can really oversee the work of two stations satisfactorily, yet for the last ten years or so the Indian Mission of our church has been so undermanned, that there were always stations without a resident missionary; places like Wadhwan, Parantij, and even a large city like Broach, have had to be content with the occasional visit of a missionary living thirty or forty or even seventy miles away. And this is what had happened now.

In Surat there was a missionary, but his whole time was taken up with the Mission press; and the schools and the district work needed another missionary of their own. It was this work that now fell to Henderson.

"We have certainly," he says, "a fine large

field of labour in Surat. In the city of Surat, with a population of 115,000, and in four of the eight talukās (counties) in the district we are the only mission at work. Down the centre of this district, between the talukās of Olpād, and Chorāsi on the west and of Māndvi and Bārdoli on the east, there runs a belt of Native State Territory belonging to the Baroda and Sachin States, as large as two talukās, whilst away to the east and north-east of the Māndvā talukā there lies a tract of hilly country still untrodden by the feet of the missionary of the Cross. Inside this great mission district, for which we alone are responsible, there lives a population of considerably over half a million souls.

"In the city we carry on a good deal of work —literary, evangelistic, educational. . . We have two high schools, one for boys and one for girls, and eleven vernacular schools for boys and girls. The Sunday School work is most encouraging. There are no less than ten Sunday Schools in the city, with forty-two teachers and 1,226 scholars, of whom 1,114 are non-Christians. Quite a number of boys who are not pupils of the Mission Day Schools attend the Sunday Schools. . . A great many of the Sunday School teachers are workers in the Mission Press, one is a teacher in a Municipal School, one is a clerk in Government service.

Double Duty

"Evangelistic work is regularly carried on by the Rev. Peter Bhudharbhai and another. I have often accompanied them, and as a rule fair-sized audiences listen to the addresses; but in this bazaar and street preaching, it is chiefly to the poor that the Gospel is preached."

Surat, like other places, is famous for the fairs that are held there on Mondays in August, the religious month of the Hindus. Henderson used to visit these with bands of preachers and singers, chiefly composed of members of the Christian Endeavour Society. Good audiences were always obtained and many Gospels and other books sold.

Indeed, in the matter of bookselling, Surat, the city of the Mission Press, held first place. In one year, 27,791 tracts and 7,413 Bibles or parts of the Bible were sold in Gujarāti alone, besides many others in English, Marāthi, Urdu, Hindi, and so on. There were two men who gave their whole time to this work of bookselling, one for Bibles and the other for tracts, and they used to push their sales on the platform of the railway station and at fairs and all over the town. There used to be a sort of race among the colporteurs all over the Bombay Presidency to see which could sell most Bibles and gospels, but the Surat man always won.

Another thing Henderson was glad to find in Surat was a flourishing branch of the Christian

Endeavour Society, from which he was often able to get help for the special bits of work he wanted to start.

The work out in the district was quite different. A large part of the population at least of two tālukas (Bārdoli and Māndvi) consisted of strange backward people, known as the Kāliparaj (Kahlee purruj), or black folk. They are not unlike the Bhils, but there are at least ten different tribes of them in the Surat district alone. Many of them were farmers in a small way, but a great many were servants to rich people, going on from generation to generation, and little better than slaves. Dr. Shillidy first started work among them, and by this time a number of them had become Christians, and there were little Christian communities of these people at Kikwād, Areth and Rusvād. These poor people were still very much like children; one had to be very patient with them, and they needed a lot of looking after. Henderson at once thought of trying to start a farm colony for them, and he was also anxious to get the children into boarding schools. If some of the children of those who had not yet become Christians were willing to come too, the Boarding school, he thought, might be made a great success. But as yet he was only thinking things out and making plans.

Turning to Broach, Henderson found many

changes since he had left it twenty-one years before. The first thing that struck him was to see how much property the Mission had acquired during the interval. "When I left to go to Borsad," he says, "in 1894, there was no Mission property at the station, no Zenana Mission, no day schools, and only two Mission workers and about a dozen Christians. Now the Mission and Zenana Mission between them own two bungalows, a hospital, a dispensary, a church, two houses in the districts and a good many houses in the compounds. The Christian community numbers over twelve dozen members and adherents, and there are five day schools and one night school." There were also five Sunday Schools, and 170 of the pupils were from among the non-Christians.

One difficulty was, that most of the Christians were at work in the mills, of which there are a good many in Broach, and these mills keep Hindu holidays, and often do not close on Sundays; the mill managers, however, were generally kind enough to arrange for Christians who wished to attend church services; but it meant losing some of their wages, so it was not altogether easy for them. Nevertheless, church services were well attended, as a rule, and there were also services held both on Sunday and Wednesday evenings in the mill quarters.

There were also two out-stations, Wāgra and Karela, where Mission workers lived and preached regularly to the people. Several Dheds living in villages some little distance from Broach had also begun to attend the services in the Broach Church, so the work was not at a standstill.

When the touring season came round, Henderson determined to see as much of his new Surat district as he could. They encamped in the different places where there were Christians, and every morning they used to go out to the villages round about to preach and in the evenings hold services for the Christians of the place, to which some of the Bhils and Kolis used also to come. Many of the people, especially the Kaliparaj, had never had a chance of hearing the gospel before, and it was very interesting preaching to them.

The touring would have been very interesting in the Broach district too, but the large Surat district, with its four counties was quite as much as could be managed, and of course he had toured in the Broach district long years before. But there was good news to greet him one time when he paid his usual monthly visit to Broach. Some of the Dheds in villages not very far from Broach, who had been coming to church on Sundays, were now ready to call themselves enquirers. A worker was sent to live in one of

their villages, and a school was opened there. For a time all went well, and then the leading people of the village began to realise that, if something were not done, they would have Christianity regularly established in their midst; so they set fire to the straw of the Dhed who had rented a house for the worker to live in, and later on they burnt the straw of several other Dheds. The people took fright and removed their children from school, and it was thought wiser for the Mission worker to be taken away for the time.

Then three men from another village and four from a third were baptised, and it became desirable to have a worker stationed in one of those villages. Attempts were made to rent a house, but no one would agree. At last a friendly Muhammadan offered a room for which he was going to charge nothing, but the other Muhammadans refused to allow the worker, when he arrived, to go into the room. The headman and several of the leading men of the village said:—"Why don't you ask Government for land and build a house of your own?" This seemed reasonable enough, but in reality they thought the missionary would never trouble to apply to Government, and when he did, instead of helping, as they had promised, they gathered the villagers together and attacked

the houses of the new Christians. Fortunately, the two men they specially wished to beat were not at home, and no one was hurt, though a good deal of damage was done to the poor people's houses; however, in the end they promised to make good the damage done and not to attack the Christians again; but they still refused to let any of their houses for the worker to live in. In the end one of the converts, who had had some education, was appointed to work for a time among the Dheds of that district.

Soon after this Henderson was able to spend what is called the Evangelistic Week at Broach. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in India decided some years ago to set apart one week in the year when all Christians were to try their best to bring others to the knowledge of Christ. This was such a success when it was tried, that the experiment was repeated year after year; the Christians prepare beforehand by prayer meetings and Bible study, and, when the time comes, preaching bands are formed, and often every man, woman and child in the congregation manages to go out some time or other and help, many going every single day. Henderson was very keen on this work. For some years he was secretary for it in Gujarāt, and he took endless trouble to stir up interest in it long before the time came. While "the week"

was on, he must have worked, wherever he was, day and night. This is how they kept it at Broach.

Starting with a prayer meeting at 7.30 in the morning, they went into the town to preach and sell books. They kept on at this till mid-day, when they returned, pretty hungry, doubtless, to breakfast. Then, with only an hour or two to get his letters written and all his other work done, he would start out again with the preaching band in the afternoon, and they would keep at it till after dark. After dinner he would go out again, this time chiefly to where the Bhils and low caste people lived, and often not get back till midnight. These night meetings were the best of all, and they always ended by those present being asked to accept the Saviour there and then, with the result that, at the end of the week, twelve people, mostly heads of families were enrolled as enquirers. That must have been hard and trying work, but it seemed well worth doing. About 1,000 gospels and tracts were sold during the time by this one band. "It was a great work," said Henderson afterwards, "and I have never passed through such a time in my life."

CHAPTER XIX

Surat

THE next year, 1917, the Rev. Dr. Steele was free to take charge of Broach, and Mr. Henderson was thus able to give all his time to Surat. He took a tremendous interest in everything that went on, especially the schools, and of course he could not keep his hands off building! One school had an upper storey added to it, the High School was enlarged and provided with a new Science wing, and so on. He started a series of lectures, too, in the High School, which different missionaries came to give, and a great many besides the members of the school used to attend on these occasions. Then the Christian Endeavour work went forward, much to his joy, and in Surat a Junior Branch was added, which soon had as many members as the Senior. As in Borsad, the boys used to hold their own meetings, and they helped in the work of the preaching bands during "the Week." The Senior branch supplied most of the Sunday School teachers who were needed, and often went out in preaching bands too.

But it was the district work that Henderson really loved. He was never so happy as when the time

came to start out on tour among his beloved Kāliparaj folk. At the beginning of one tour they had a particularly happy Sunday at a place called Rusvād, for seven converts and eight babies were baptised. At other places there would be no Christians, but you could visit different towns and fairs from your camp, and good audiences would be found and many books sold. Henderson used to ride to these places on a bicycle, but the roads, as he says, "were not exactly bicycle tracks, and I had more than once to dismount in a hurry, to admire the scenery!" It was perhaps not very good for him to ride so much on these rough roads, and anyhow it was fairly dangerous. "One day, returning from a village, I decided to let my bicycle race down a hill, as the road looked particularly good, but near the foot of the hill, when the bike had gathered full speed, it suddenly ran into a bed of fairly large boulders. Some people standing at the top of the hill evidently thought I was going to be killed outright, for they shouted out at the top of their voices, 'Take care!' but there was no time to take care, and, before I knew where I was, I landed on the ground, fortunately on my feet! Though I lost some skin occasionally in dismounting in a hurry, I was always able to sing: 'But the bike's all right!'"

In another camp they were close to the police

lines. "A Brahman policeman, who lustily sang verses from the Hindu Shastras and cleared his throat with extraordinary vigour in the early hours of the morning, saw to it that we woke up in good time every day!"

At the fairs and markets they sold a lot of books, many buying who could not even read. "Oh, we'll get someone to read them to us all right," they would say. But a good deal of that part of the country is very unhealthy and Henderson delighted in collecting rhyming proverbs about it, especially a place called Devgad. One of them was:

"Maldha, Limdha, Moti Pāl, If you don't die there, to Devgad *chāl*" (i.e., walk).

In another Devgad is supposed to say:

"I'll turn you yellow, I'll turn you green; if you don't die then, helpless I've been."

There was one thing Henderson never failed to do when he was on tour, and that was to set people playing! He believed play was every bit as important as work. At every village he camped at, where there were any Christians at all, he used to get up sports for the children and give prizes, ranging from a pie ($\frac{1}{12}$ penny) to two pence. Sometimes the whole village would turn out, Christians and non-Christians, and even old men would enter for the races! You could always tell where the missionary was by going

where you heard plenty of fun and plenty of noise, and saw clouds of dust in the air!

The year 1918 was a very happy one. Henderson, as Secretary to the Presbytery's Evangelistic Campaign committee, was able to give the most encouraging reports of "the Week," not only in Surat, but all over the Mission. Less than eighty years before, there were two or three missionaries in Surat belonging to the London Missionary Society, and a very small band of their converts, and just two Irish missionaries, and no converts at all, in Rajkot. Now, during this one week alone, over Gujarāt and Kāthiāwār, the Gospel was preached at 3,679 places by 1,390 workers, most of whom were just ordinary Christians, not employed by the Mission. They found nearly 150,000 people ready to listen to them, distributed 25,500 leaflets, sold over 16,000 Bibles and parts of the Bible, and nearly 12,000 tracts, and 186 men and 38 women were enrolled as enquirers. More than a fifth of the entire Christian Community (even counting infants!) took part in the campaign of that week. And then, of course, there was all the work that was being done by the other Missions in Gujarāt. No wonder Henderson felt encouraged!

He himself spent the week that year out in the districts, where they had very good meetings and camped in a great many places, in spite of the

fact that plague was about and a considerable number of people were living in plague huts outside their villages. In one place the chief man of the village had lost his son, and came to see if Henderson could give him any comfort. "There was nobody in the village like the boy," he said, "nobody so good, so obedient, so industrious. To me he was like the very apple of my eye. Why has God taken him from me? I search for an answer to this question day and night, but I can find none. I can't think of any evil I have done that deserves such punishment. Can you explain it?" Henderson tried to tell him about Jesus, the great comforter, and how, when He was on earth, He used to go about comforting mourners just like this poor man, and had lighted up the future for all who trust in Him. The man bought a New Testament, and one or two other books, and seemed a little comforted; "but it's hard," says Henderson, "to comfort those who have no hope."

He found the Christians at the different places where he encamped very glad to see him and to learn more and be encouraged. At one place, Rusvād, they badly needed a church, and houses for the workers to live in. It was war time, and you could hardly expect to get much money from home; but the generous efforts of his sister-in-law, Mrs. Campbell, raised £150 towards the cost,

and with great joy he started to prepare plans; but he was never able to build the church himself.

One thing that greatly encouraged him was the steadfastness of the new converts in a little village called Kosmādi, where a number of Bhils had become enquirers, and on a certain Sunday of the previous year, forty-seven people, including seventeen babies, were baptised. On his visit this year, he found them still faithful, although they were being bitterly persecuted on account of their religion. Do we realise how much persevering prayer persecuted Christians like these in their lonely villages need? If we fail them in this, can we wonder if they sometimes yield at last to the constant daily pressure, and go back? But, though most of the big people in that village were unfriendly, the people in some of the villages round were very ready to listen to the preaching. Indeed, the people in one or two villages where these new Christians had relatives, were beginning to ask for teachers. Henderson was able eventually to send one teacher for two or three villages, who could stay in one and visit the others; but even this he could only do by closing down a school he had started somewhere else where it was needed too.

One can picture him going from village to village in his happy way, riding his old bike, on those dreadful roads. "I have had a good deal

of practice," he writes, "in what I may call automatic dismounting, in which the rider gets off first and thinks about how to do it afterwards!" He would go to a village and show large Bible pictures, or, if it was night time, magic lantern slides, and always there would be crowds to see and to listen. If they found the books were not selling fast enough, Henderson would send his helpers from house to house in the village, and they would sell more books in this way than ever before.

Another encouraging event marks this, his last year of active work. Mr. Archibald came and held meetings for a good many days in the High School, as well as in the church, and the boys listened with rapt attention. About Christmas time he came back and held a Boys' Camp, not in Surat itself, but in a place called Dumas, by the sea, about ten miles away, where the Mission has a bungalow and a spacious compound. Henderson was Commandant of the Camp, and it is doubtful if he ever enjoyed himself more. Let Mr. Archibald give his recollection of this camp:

"Three of the Irish missionaries were with us, one of whom, Mr. Henderson, was our Colonel; and a jollier commandant couldn't be found. We had tremendous fun all the week. During the daytime the sun was a bit hot, but a couple of huge banyan trees afforded sufficient shade for

stump-cricket. Every evening we turned out for footer and cricket. The footer, for some mad reason, usually degenerated into a rumble-tumble without any rules except ' kick whatever happens to be in front of you all the time.' This suited our gallant Colonel down to the ground, and one of the camp treats was to watch him in the middle of a gorgeous scrum kicking for dear life at something ! not the ball." (Remember, he was over fifty-five ?)

" On the last week-day of camp, a Saturday, we planned a whole day expedition across the mouth of the Tapti to a place named Sulavi. We hired four boats and packed twenty into each of them, and punted our way to the opposite shore, after which came a two mile wade over the mud to reach the village and the lighthouse, where we had our mid-day meal. By evening a breeze had sprung up, and we finished the day with a glorious sail across the river-mouth. On reaching the other shore, the Colonel held a mock inspection and then in a few well-chosen words, which nobody could understand, congratulated his mud-bespattered legions on their smart appearance. The same evening there was held an impromptu concert, which gave rein to the local talent, more especially to two brothers who played the clown.

" The Camp meetings were held morning and evening under a big tent. Practically all the boys

had professed to decide for Christ during the missions earlier in the year, and our chief reason for getting them all away to this camp was that they might lay hold of some of the great secrets of God's Kingdom and lead a stronger spiritual life. Temptation and Victory were our themes, and it all led up to the battle-cry of Sunday morning—*Make Jesus King!*

"One evening, after an address on 1 St. John v. 5, by Mr. Henderson, we struck up an English chorus which was destined to become more than any other our Camp chorus—'I believe we shall win if we fight in the strength of the King.'

"Most of the campers, both boys and girls, are now enrolled as 'Swordsmen' or 'Sword-bearers,' and are fighting the King's battles in their own lives."

All the time he was in Surat Henderson had been doing his best to get recruits for Government to help in the war. They were mostly for the labour corps, whose work went on for years after the war was over, when there was all the tidying up to be done. Some even of the new Christians from among the Kāliparaj joined up, and two of them laid down their lives in Mesopotamia. Of the Surat district "there is no doubt," he writes, "that our Christian people in proportion to their numbers stand easily first in the matter of war service."

CHAPTER XX

The Valley of the Shadow

In the hot weather of 1919 Mr. Henderson's neighbour at Broach, the Rev. Dr. Steele, accepted a two months' chaplaincy at a place in the hills, called Dalhousie, and Dr. and Mrs. Steele asked the Hendersons and one or two others to share the Chaplain's bungalow with them. They had a very happy time all together for a while, and Henderson in particular needed the holiday badly, for he hardly ever took one, and had been suffering a good deal from malaria. One day Dr. Steele took seriously ill and had to have an operation; he began to get better after it, and then suddenly he got worse again and died.

It was a tremendous blow to the Mission. Dr. Steele had altogether unique gifts as an administrator, and was a man of great attainments, one of those who can do almost anything, and do it perfectly. But it was also a great shock to Henderson, who came from the same county and had followed close after him in school and college, and been his friend and colleague for so many

years on the Mission field. On him now fell the sad duty of making the arrangements for the funeral of his friend; and, only a few days later, he took ill himself. At first it did not seem anything very serious; something of the nature of rheumatism. But he got steadily worse instead of improving. He had to go on staying in that house, since it was impossible to move him, and month after month he lay there, suffering acutely and getting no better. Yet he was as cheerful as ever, and though unable to write, used to send his friends the cheeriest messages. After many months they were at last able in November to get him moved down to Surat, to see if the change would do him any good; abscesses developed on the spine, and in December he was taken for a month to St. George's Hospital, Bombay, for further treatment, where his heroic cheerfulness won the admiration of all. But it was evident that there was nothing for it but home, and it seemed doubtful if he would ever reach there alive.

One gratifying incident occurred as he lay at Surat on his bed, unable to move. The medal, which had been conferred on him by the Government of India as a souvenir and mark of their appreciation of the war work he had done in India, was pinned on his breast by a deputation which came to the house for the purpose. No

more gallant soldier ever received it. He had also been appointed Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in India, in succession to Dr. Steele, but after a month or two had to send in his resignation, as he had no immediate hope of being able to take up the duties.

It was not easy at that time to get a passage home; efforts were made in high places, for Henderson's pluck and patience had won for him the affection and admiration of all sorts of people; but it was not till May 15th that he was at last carried on board a home-going steamer.

They reached London on June 6th, and went straight to the London Hospital. The specialist he saw took an unexpectedly hopeful view of the case and advised him to go direct to his old home which he did, and no sooner did he reach there than he began to get better, his native Antrim air having a miraculous effect. It was indeed a beautiful thing that he was allowed to go back to the home of his boyhood, after having been allowed to see the fulfilment of his heart's desire in a life of service on the Mission field. What happy thoughts must have come to him of all the years between?

All this time, of course, he had to lie flat on his back, and he was in a great deal of pain, but no one ever saw him impatient. Indeed, it is doubtful if he ever allowed himself to feel dull or

bored. Perhaps it was because, wherever he was, he was so interested in other people that he never found time to think about himself, which is after all the true antidote to boredom.

Anyhow, it was a happy time for his children. They seemed to be getting a chance of knowing their father for the first time in their lives. "It was during the last two years," writes his daughter, "that we really began to know him better. He was forced through ill-health to stay at home and couldn't rush around the North of Ireland on deputation work, as he was wont to do on other furloughs. When he arrived in 1920, we went to Randalstown, in the hope that his native air together with fresh eggs and butter, would literally put him on his feet again. His patience was extraordinary. He would lie there on his back with a joke ready for everybody; sometimes he held quite a reception, and his friends from miles around came to see him. He taught my small cousins a few words of Gujarāti, and we could hear them shouting, "Shābāsh!' throughout the house.

"We used to carry him out on a stretcher to the front of the house, which is rightly called Fair View. You can see for miles around, getting a bird's eye view of the whole country. Far across the valley Slemish rises abruptly on the horizon, and on a fine day it is a joy to sit and

watch the shadows chasing each other across the stretch of country. He would lie there, sometimes reading, sometimes talking of those who lived in houses dotted here and there in the valley. Sometimes we would see the white puff of a train and follow the track for miles and watch it stopping at the stations here and there. On a very clear day we could see Lough Neagh shining not so very far away. It was no wonder that in the fresh, wide expanse, health gradually came back to him. One of his favourite jokes was that he was an infant learning to sit up and to walk. He dated his birth from the first day he had to lie flat on his back. 'I am two years old to-day,' he would say, 'a most advanced infant!'

"Then we moved to Portstewart, and gradually he began to take part once more in all our sports: bathing, cycling, blackberry picking, and long rambles by the shore or in the woods.

"In the few months he was here, he got to know every man, woman, child, dog and cat in the neighbourhood. It was quite a novelty to take a walk with him, he had a word for everybody we met, and called each person by name, even the small school children. Once I looked back down the road we had come, and saw everybody smiling and still turning back. He seemed to have the gift of leaving smiles and happiness wherever he went. At first some of the Portstewart children

were quite frightened when he told them he was an Indian, but gradually they discovered that he wasn't at all black, and that he wouldn't eat them. So they greeted him with joy and expected a joke from him as he passed. There was one old man who lived alone in a cottage up the lane. One evening there was no sign of Daddy at supper-time, and when he eventually arrived home, he told us he had been sitting by the side of the road hearing all the old man's love stories! He regaled us with these stories all through supper.

"He preached his first sermon, after his illness, at Ballywatt, and mother and I motored there with him. He had been asked to speak to the children and to be as genial as possible! We had been teasing him about being genial—he certainly was! I can remember well the expression on the faces of those children as they listened to him. Not a child fidgeted, you could hear a pin drop. I could see wreaths of smiles growing broader and broader, and then the little faces would grow suddenly serious, as the story passed with lightning quickness from the joys of the little Indian children to their sorrows. He could interest everybody in his subject, because he was so interested himself."

It really was wonderful how he had recovered against what all his friends had believed possible. He went about as usual preaching for anybody

who asked him—and it was a shame the way they took advantage of his unfailing good nature—and at last he was even allowed by the doctor to hope for a return to India. He lost no time in taking his passage for that autumn, and at the time of the Assembly in Belfast in June, of 1921, he was quite expecting to be back in India within a few months. He was so much better that he was able to address the Assembly, and a tremendous reception he got. It was a great speech, as good as any he ever made. This was the last paragraph of it:

"And this brings me, before sitting down, to make an appeal, not for money, but for men; not for a great many men, only for three or four. That isn't a large number. Death, as I have already stated, has robbed us of some of our missionaries, five of us who are still on active service would be on the retired list owing to age were we in Government service. We therefore need men. I am sometimes asked: 'Isn't India a difficult field of labour?' Yes, it is, and the present non-co-operative movement renders Mission work in India more difficult still. But are we going to shirk the task of winning a portion of India for Christ on that account? Was the task Christ undertook easy? Think of what it cost. Was the task which William Carey, which Judson, which David Livingstone undertook, easy?

Was it ? Was the winning of the war an easy task ? Think of what it cost us ! Think also of the grand response made by the very flower of our youth to the call of Europe, a call to service and sacrifice. Think of the thousands who laid down their lives for king and country, thousands of our best and noblest. India needs you, calls you now. Permit a personal reference. Thirty-two years ago I attended this Assembly as the minister of the congregation of Castledawson. A few months afterwards the call to go out to India came to me through one, who, it isn't too much to say, is the uncrowned king of this Assembly, Dr. Park. After considerable hesitation I decided to go, and I went, and I stand here to-night to say that I have never once regretted that step. I believe my life has been richer, fuller, happier, perhaps also more useful, than if I had stayed in Castledawson. And now I stretch out my hands and appeal to you, young ministers and licentiates of the church. I appeal to you in the name of our undermanned staff in India, in the name of the Indian church, in the name of the people of India who need Christ's healing touch, now more than ever, and above all, in the name of the great King and Head of the Church, come over to India and help us. Won't you come ? "



REV. R. HENDERSON WITH GROUP OF NATIVE INDIAN WORKERS.

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CHAPTER XXI

The Road Home

THE summer was spent happily in Portstewart, and he had the great joy of seeing his married daughter and her husband, who had just returned from Switzerland, and of making the acquaintance of his grandchild. The child simply adored him, as all children did, and had eyes for no one else when he was there, and the house would resound with the shouts of laughter from both, and the noise and fun they made. There were not many who could so naturally enter into the pleasures and joys of a child.

One pleasant day in August, the 11th it was, their neighbour, Mrs. Wilson, herself a missionary's wife, had asked the Hendersons all of them to come for a picnic to the White Rocks, near Portrush, some distance away. Mr. Henderson had not been feeling quite so well of late, and he thought he had better not risk being the whole day out, so he and Mrs. Henderson and their married daughter decided to stay at home. However, Henderson was always so interested in what everybody was doing, that he turned up

first to tell them they were going to have a lovely day, and then a second time to see the party off and warn them to be careful about where they bathed, as there were strong currents in some places that were dangerous. He was to meet his son and daughter in the afternoon at Portrush at a bazaar, and " regularly go on the razzle-dazzle." Meanwhile, he himself thought he would go and have a bathe, and, seeing some friends, he promised to be after them in a few minutes; but somehow or other, he met so many people on the road, and he always had to talk to everyone he met, that he never caught up with his friends. He must have given up hope of overtaking them, and just gone in to bathe by himself. Presently some ladies noticed him far out, vainly struggling against the big waves, and they gave the alarm; but he was never seen alive again. No one will ever know what happened, and it was not till early on the following Sunday morning that his body was found, washed up on the sand.

It was a sad procession that followed the earthly frame of so beloved a friend to the grave at his old home in Randalstown. Was this after all the end of those months, running to years, of excruciating agony, so cheerfully borne, of all that devoted, unwearied nursing by his wife, of the gradual betterment and brightening hopes, culminating at last in permission to go back to

his loved Mission Field? Did he come through the dark valley, only to leave us like this on a bright summer's day? We shall understand it all some day, no doubt, and meanwhile we know that it must fit in with our great Leader's plans for him, for those he loved, and for India. It may be that He Whose path is in the great waters took him home by so swift and short a road, to save him the disappointment of finding (as he well might have found) that India was no longer for him, and that he could have returned there only to start again a weary invalid life.

And at any rate, he had the passing he would have chosen; he was a boy all his life, a boy to the end, and he died as a boy, out for a swim in the sea he so loved. "He went forth gaily on his Master's errand," said the Convener, Dr. Thompson, at the funeral; gaily he had faced a lingering death for months, and gaily and gallantly he faced the swift death that God sent him in the end. He had his share of sorrow, of parting from loved ones, of disappointments, and far more than his share of pain; and yet one thinks of him as

> "A happy soul, who all the way
> To Heaven had a summer's day."

And as one pictures him, after all that suffering, gaily preparing to return to India, when not

really fit, simply because there was no one to take his place, one seems to see him, as in his last Assembly speech, stretching out his hands to those who stood at the cross-roads, a sort of living sign-post, saying: "*This way to India*, if you would make the most people happy, if you would light up the deepest darkness, if you would spend your life where it can be of the greatest use to our Saviour and King, the Lord Jesus Christ."

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